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THE COLLECTED POEMS OF ARTHUR UPSON

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Author of
Minnesota Song

THE COLLECTED POEMS

OF

ARTHUR UPSON

Arthur Upson

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THE

COLLECTED POEMS

OF

ARTHUR UPSON

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

RICHARD BURTON

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I

DISCARDED

MINNEAPOLIS
EDMUND D. BROOKS
1909

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NOTE

These collected poems include the previously published volumes of Arthur Upson's verse, with such exclusions as seemed wise, together with poems written later or for some reason not printed therein.

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INTRODUCTION

I

Arthur Upson, — or Arthur Wheelock Upson, as he was baptized, — like so many western Americans, was an easterner by birth. He was born in Camden, N. Y., January 10, 1877.

His father, Spencer Johnson Upson, was a native of Camden and for many years engaged in the Insurance business there; a citizen much respected and prominent, who held various positions of responsibility in the social, political and religious life of the town. He was for a long time Secretary of the Board of Education.

The poet's mother was Julia Claflin of Boonesville, N. Y., a woman whose delicacy of nature, refinement and deep appreciation of her son's literary aspirations and later accomplishment made the bond between them peculiarly close so long as they both lived.

The lad's early education was received from the Camden Academy and, quite as important, from the influences of a cultured home. Arthur was of frail body, visionary in his imagination but active and full of outdoor play; he had his own pony to ride and grew up in an environment happily combining the country and the town. The good times were many in the pleasant house with its hospitable porch and ample grounds; and it was but a step into all the beauty which nature offers man. When the boy was but nine, he lost an only sister (commemorated in a poem in the present volume), and

the shock imperilled his life. At ten he was writing verse and prose; a drama in French was the most ambitious effort, and all his writing showed remarkable facility in handling the literary forms and in the feeling for artistic expression. While a mere boy he drew a little literary circle around him, and by means of the letter exchange in "Wide Awake" and other children's periodicals, established a correspondence which widened his outlook and added to his power of expression. In one instance this led to a friendship of twenty years with Miss Sharlot Hall of Los Angeles, whose poems of Arizona life are among the best that have come out of the West; the two never met, and yet Miss Hall writes: "I doubt if there ever was such a friendship. . . . He shared to a wonderful degree his world of books and people with me, and I gave him all of my desert land that I could translate." From the ages of ten to seventeen, severe illnesses interrupted his school life, and it seemed doubtful if he could survive maturity.

In 1893, when he was sixteen, Upson attended the World's Fair at Chicago; and thence went on to the pretty Mississippi river town of Faribault to visit friends; with them he also journeyed to St. Paul and Minneapolis, coming East by the Great Lakes. He was graduated the next summer from the Camden Academy, receiving the gold medal for the graduating poem, and that autumn removed with his family to St. Paul, and entered the University of Minnesota as a member of the class of 1898.

In the sophomore year his health became uncertain; financial reverses also came to the family. The result was that for four years of suspended college work Upson earned his living travelling about the country as a book agent; for one summer he was employed as a guide in the Yellowstone Park, along with other collegians. Full of courage, he did

what was necessary, and during this period of work and travel, broadened his knowledge of life and continually wrote verse which was sent home as a sort of chronicle of his wanderings.

The fruit of this was the first of his books of verse, published with the imprimatur of the University Press and called "At the Sign of the Harp." After a summer trip abroad in 1900, he resumed college that autumn, and the volume appeared later in the year. That first European jaunt, keenly enjoyed and doing much for the young man's development, brought forth some charming descriptive letters and a number of articles for American newspapers, as well as the poems which throughout his life he wrote as the most natural vent for his deeper self.

The University work was pursued into the senior year, when the health of this brilliant collegian again interfered with the prosecution of his studies; but in recognition of the high quality of his scholarship and his creative endeavor as expressed in the poem drama "The City," his degree was granted by the college authorities, despite the technical failure to complete his course.

During Upson's college career the present writer became deeply attached to the promising young scholar poet; he was handsome in person, with an air of good breeding in all his ways; eager for culture, a passionate lover of literature and the arts; one of those exceptionally gifted and charming young men it is the joy of a teacher to watch as he expands, and, if possible, to help in the shaping of his powers.

He was respected and admired by his fellow students, loved of his intimates; he had a genius for friendship. His quality in literature was recognized early by his associates, for, as has been said, he published his maiden book as an undergraduate. Various honors and posts of trust were conferred upon him by the college community. He was one of the committee of

three to write the class play; he added a stanza to the University Ode, which is sung by all loyal Minnesotans.

After graduation, he found congenial labor as an associate of Edmund D. Brooks, whose Bookrooms are a Minneapolis institution. Upson's wide knowledge of literature and his taste for the niceties of bibliography made him valuable to Mr. Brooks, who had faith in his friend's ability and published in beautiful editions several of the young man's volumes of verse.

Not only did the poet develop special skill as a cataloguer, but to those who dropped in to price a first edition or finger lovingly some unique manuscript, he seemed an indispensable part of the Bookrooms' higher atmosphere.

Upson was well-nigh as much at home in the domain of art and music as in that of literature; his love for the art world brought him one of the most helpful and valuable friendships of his life, that with Mr. John L. Bradstreet of Minneapolis, widely known as an artist decorator; and his intimacy with Dr. Alfred Owre of the University of Minnesota, whose wonderful collection of *cloisonné* was a bond of interest between the two, further enriched his life, as did many acquaintances among musicians; his lyrics richly reflect these interests.

In 1906 he was appointed to a position in the English department of the University, entering upon it in the autumn with high heart, for it was work he had always believed he should love. He did good service until the spring, when the connection came to an end through his illness. There followed a respite for recuperation, which included some delightful months abroad. During this sojourn he attended the summer school at Jena, and afterwards took lectures at the University of Berlin, where he was invited to conduct conversation classes in English. He did not accept the offer, however, for his father's serious illness brought him suddenly home in Decem-

ber, 1907; six months later, after protracted suffering, his father died. While abroad, he visited the quaint town of Pornic in Brittany, to study the legend of Gold Hair, which he had made the motive of his last work, "Gauvaine of the Retz," upon which he wrought with great industry and courage through the wearing days when his father's sickness bore heavily on his heart.

On his return he rejoined Mr. Brooks, giving his afternoons to the Bookrooms and using the mornings for his own literary work. He had been laboring hard on his play, when in mid-summer of 1908 he left Minneapolis for a vacation, and on the evening of August 14 was drowned from his boat in Bemidji Lake, Minnesota. He had that very day completed the drama, the manuscript of which he had carried with him for the purpose; but it has not been found.

During the last two years of his life Arthur Upson was quietly gaining recognition in his vocation of song; his nature was deepening, his work was steadily of broader note and firmer art. A few months before his passing he was affianced to one who brought him sympathy and appreciation. His health, always precarious, seemed more constant than before. There was much of encouragement, a promise of success and happiness in the outlook. The young singer felt that his Rubicon was passed, victory within his grasp. But he was to lay down his life work at thirty-one, when the best of his achievement seemed to lie before him; in the flush of young manhood his earthly activities ceased. Yet he left to his friends the memory of a nature as high, pure and noble as it has been their lot to know; and to all who love poetry, a body of song which, it is the editor's belief, will ensure him a place among the lyrists of his native land.

Some statement as to the quality and significance of his work may now follow.

II

To deserve serious attention, a poet must have a vision of beauty and be able adequately to give it voice. The first requirement means that he must conceive life imaginatively and seize on its deeper significance, its spiritual values. The second means the possession of skill in saying his say. It implies a diction fit and fine, an ear sensitive to the music of measures and the control of form. Sometimes there is the gift without the skill; sometimes the skill with nothing truly worth while to say. Hence a world full of half-poets.

Arthur Upson, it would seem, stands the twin tests. His poetic testament is considerable, despite his early death. It consists of the seven volumes published during his life, together with a large number of pieces printed in the present volumes as a final group: poems either late written or for some other reason not included in the previous books. As one reads the poetry in its due sequence, one cannot but notice that Upson begins to write with little of that clumsiness of hand common to the novitiate of any art, and that the work steadily gains in breadth and a truer perception of the great meanings of the human soul. What of limitation there may be in the earliest volume, for example, is surely that of depth rather than of technic or poetic feeling. The young verseman is content to sing of the lovely things he knows with delicacy, grace and charm. As the Rev. John W. Chadwick said on reading "At the Sign of the Harp," a poet judging a poet: "All is bright and sweet; everywhere there is a quaintness and a perfume as of linen cool and lavendered; everywhere a subtle and pervasive charm, a quality in the verse that is more than thought or form. They might have been written in Arcadia." And so they were; in the Arcadia of a young man's

spirit, whither he fled for solace and whence he returned to testify thereof. Naturally, the inspiration is largely what may be called literary; these early poems are bookish, as the work of young bards generally is. But they are their own excuse for being, and already promise is made of what was to come. Indeed, both promise and performance are in the first book.

In the three volumes of verse which appeared in the year 1902, this growth is clearly shown. One of them, simply called "Poems," and written in collaboration with a fellow collegian, George Norton Northrop, is tentative and experimental; chiefly interesting, perhaps, for certain attempts to widen his power over metres and the subtleties of tone color. In "Westwind Songs" the gamut is wider, the touch firmer; it is a charming collection, beyond doubt testifying to the maturing of the poet's gifts. The grave sweetness of "Thou Didst Not Die," the noble "Mothers and Sisters," the lyric cry of "May Night," — these are widening harmonies, one feels. But in the third book, published, like the "Westwind Songs," in the autumn of that year, the progress is still more noteworthy in all that goes to make poetry. "Octaves in an Oxford Garden" possesses a distinction, a mellowness of thought and art, such as to set it apart. It is a group of some thirty lyrics registering the mood, half happy, half sad, of one from overseas who sits a-dream amidst the tranced and storied loveliness of an English university. Surely, it must always rank high among this young singer's production. It was conceived under an ancient yew in the garden close of Wadham College and perfectly expresses that sense of beauty commingled of history, nature and humanity which was characteristic of Upson. It is a thing so exquisite in execution, so lovely in kind, as to produce a deep, albeit quiet, satisfaction in all who respond to adequate phrasing, tender feeling and an unobtrusive but very potent music.

When two years later he published the poem drama entitled "The City," he obviously gave a further pledge of his power; the maturing poet turned instinctively to the most exacting and robust of all the forms of verse. Three poetic plays were completed by him: this, "The Tides of Spring" and the lost "Gauvaine"; others were planned. It is evident that dramatic poetry was to be increasingly a favorite form of expression as he went on. It is entirely reasonable to believe that his dramatic writing would have met stage conditions more closely as he continued to make plays, and so done their part in the welcome rebirth of poetic drama in the English-speaking lands. The remark is all the more justified in the fact that "The Tides of Spring" was accepted by Donald Robertson for presentation in Chicago and will have been presented ere these words are read.

This first drama is one to read rather than to see, though strong in pictorial effects. In it the student soul is revealed vibrant with the sense of the beauty of ancientry; the technic is firm, the blank verse, interspersed with some fascinating lyrics, of varied modulations and often great felicity. The composition exhibits a far deeper feeling for the psychological contrasts of human character than he had as yet shown. The motive is true and impressive. When that exquisite artist of verse, the late T. B. Aldrich, read this play, he wrote: "I especially admire the Scriptural piece called 'The City.' It is original in design and shows most skilful workmanship. Mr. Upson is certainly a poet of rare quality."

The edition of "The City" published by the Macmillan Company the next year was augmented and enriched by a few added sonnets and lyrics in other forms; then in 1907 came the lovely Scotch history play "The Tides of Spring,"— and the tale of books to appear during the singer's lifetime was complete. The present edition is, however, greatly en-

riched and broadened by the fortunate inclusion of a good number of additional poems, often expressing the maturest of his thought, the finest of his art.

For conception, construction and verbal execution it is hard to find a flaw in the one-act Scotch play; a love story steeped in the magic of the past, highly pictorial, rich in character portrayal, noble and gentle in its ideals, all in a ravishing setting of springtime and of song, — little more could be asked of this kind of literature. It is interesting to know that it was but one of a planned series of dramas based on Scotch historical material, which strongly attracted the poet.

And the last-written and lost play, "Gauvaine of The Retz," was, by the testimony of the privileged few who heard it, the best expression of the poet's maturity. It had the following dedication:

"To that distinguished lover of the antique and the beautiful,

JOHN S. BRADSTREET,

This reading from the faded tapestries of Romance is affectionately inscribed."

As the writer himself described it, it was a tragic love story told in dramatic form, the scene of which is laid mainly in the Retz country of Lower Brittany in the middle of the fourteenth century. The heroine, Audile, was the Gold Hair of Robert Browning's Story of Pornic; the hero, Gauvaine, a young warrior on the side of Charles of Blois in the violent conflict with the Montforts for ducal supremacy in Brittany.

The action of the piece involved an explanation of the deposit of gold pieces discovered in the château-maiden's hair, on her exhumation a century or more after her death. This varies entirely from the "Story," in which Browning has unfortunately preserved the village superstition of Audile's vulgar

avarice, and varies in a manner not only intensely dramatic, but psychologically consistent in the working out. Besides a careful use of historical material, the author made special visits to remote and primitive parts of Celtic France, the half Druidical and wholly romantic scenes of which form the backgrounds of the story. It will be well to give here a letter he wrote to Mr. Brooks, in itself a charming piece of prose, for the light it throws upon a work which can be known only thus indirectly:

HOTEL BELLE VUE,
KERHUON, FINISTÈRE,
July 2, 1907.

MY DEAR MR. BROOKS, — It does not seem three weeks since the day I hurried over from Charing Cross, stepped from train to boat at Folkestone, from boat to train at Boulogne, rushed across Paris in a cab, and found you at Chartres, where, in the supper-room of the Grand Monarque, we talked over our plans for the next five days.

The evening journey from Paris to Chartres seemed, at the time, interminable; but I can remember only four episodes in connection with it: how the cabman cheated me at Montparnasse; how at Versailles the palace and the gardens glided past; how at Le Perray the frogs croaked and dogs bayed in the farmyards, and I came to the darker borders of twilight where poppies ceased to flame in the fields and the lights of the villages gleamed out among the poplars; lastly, how the courtyard of the Grand Monarque shone cheerfully through rain. It was good to see you there.

Our plans included cathedrals, châteaux, ancient walled cities, and even the (then unimagined) glory of Mont St. Michel. But it was, above all, a little fishing village near the mouth of the Loire, the home of Gold Hair, which drew us, because a certain poet had written of it and lived

there, finding much food for his philosophical fancy in its remote quietude.

In the morning we loitered long in the precincts of the vast cathedral, marvelling at Gothic grandeur and the richness of painted windows. Going on to Le Mans in the afternoon, just as the sun was setting over the Sarthe we came unexpectly upon that madrigal in stone, the hill-cresting apse of St. Julian's with its encircling chapels and airy buttresses. Next day, in the city of Geoffrey Plantagenet, we saw the cathedral seven centuries old, and that coeval castellated bulk which overfrowns the Maine, hung with soft mauve of *lilas d'Espagne* and pennoned with scarlet poppies; from Angers to Nantes, where we drove through streets ancient and modern, and sipped after-dinner cordials to good music in front of that paragon of hostelries, the Grand Hotel de France. Then, another day, to commence auspiciously with a perfect cup of chocolate and that train to Pornic from which none warned us we should change; the gratuitous excursion into Poitou, the return from Coex — Coex, with its flat, red-tiled cottages, and wooden ploughs, pulled by oxen — to St. Pazanne and its memorable *déjeuner* with the three jovial *commis voyageurs!*

Finally, at Pornic we explored steep and winding streets, rows of villas, lanes deep in ivy and pink locusts, fields of buckwheat, long white-washed walls hung with little golden flowers — on to Ste. Marie and the rocks that Browning loved. There were roses all the way to Ste. Marie, and the afternoon was full of soft mist, now and then shot through with momentary sunlight. From this "wild little place in Brittany," where Browning used to "walk on the edge of the low rocks by the sea for miles," we saw the fishers' sails, copperas-blue and rust-red, slowly drifting up the bay on the tide in the windless afternoon. These were the sails and rocks

and water which James Lee's wife knew, and this the bay of the philosopher in "Fifine at the Fair," whose titanic poem is filled with the color and sound of what his passion clung to "on Pornic's placid shore, abundant air to breathe, sufficient sun to feel!"

As to Gold Hair, the maid of Pornic, whose "boasted name in Brittany" Browning would not write, where else could she have dwelt but in the château whose rose-grown courtyard we explored? The old church of Ste. Marie, as we knew from Browning's letters, has been torn down and supplanted by a smart new one. But in the new one there is preserved the ancient knight in stone of which Touchard-Lafosse, the antiquarian, wrote in 1840:

"He has the costume of a knight. It is a large rock placed on a level with the ground, on which is sculptured the said figure in relief. There are around it Gothic characters which no one has been able to interpret. The costume of the knight and the form of the characters should refer the monument to the thirteenth or fourteenth century."

Touchard-Lafosse describes the old church, only lightly alluded to in Browning's letters; and it was from his monumental work, "La Loire, Historique, Pittoresque et Biographique" (Nantes, 1840–45), that I received the clues for certain descriptions in this dramatic romance. If Gold Hair was laid in the chancel or near the altar of the old church of Ste. Marie, her family must have had large means to pay for the honor, and if they were of Pornic, as the story goes, my assumption that they were the people of the château is most likely to be correct.

After we had visited the château, and while we were driving on the opposite side of the bay from which is had the loveliest view of it and of the rock-built village, we talked about the first scenes of this story of mine. I had

read them to you on the train from Coex to St. Pazanne, and you had applauded. But we saw that, in fact, the château was differently situated from the manner in which I had described it, and that the church of Ste. Marie was further from it than my requirements demanded.

We agreed there at Pornic that one may rearrange for dramatic purposes, and thereby heighten, so far from lessening, the effect of truth. I shall continue in this way until the piece, which now rests as you saw it, is finished and in the hands of the printers.

The view across the estuary of the Lauderneau, from where I write, is so beautiful that I wish you and other good friends could share it with me. Rain has left a silver mist over the green slopes of the hither shore, which throws into double perspective the gigantic granite rocks across the passage on the Plougastel peninsula. But the sun is full upon the face of earth and waters, and shines splendidly along my terrace. Far away on the other side of the long hill the village of Plougastel is basking; her church spire just arises above the ridge. I spent five days in that still Breton commune, and my story has taken fuller shape there among the somber-minded peasants, whose strange rites I have seen on the Eve of St. Jean and at the Pardon of St. Pierre.

These lines pursue you to the western rim of the American continent, with many good wishes and pleasant memories of days in Brittany together, and of many other days in our well-loved city among the Minnesota lakes.

ARTHUR UPSON.

But what now, looking at Upson's work as a whole, are those distinctive qualities which mark him out from other followers of the Muse? That he loved to build the lofty

rhyme, and earnestly pursued Beauty, none knowing his life will gainsay. But this is not enough. I have already expressed the conviction that he did more, that his verse is poetry in the larger, more permanent sense.

These qualities come out plainly, I think, from a thoughtful acquaintance with the body of his work. He had, as has been said, a firm grasp on the materials of his art. His technic was not timorous; it does not illustrate the slavish obeyance of rules, but the rejoicing freedom of the artist who realizes the truth of Goethe's saying that it is within the confines of law that liberty is to be found. Upson's verse abounds in those artistic irregularities which delight the connoisseur. Take, for instance, the fine line of "Tragic Winds,"

"Viols throbbing out some earth-impassioned hymn,"

and note the surplusage of syllables, the cumulative effect of music. Such lines, scanned by the rule of thumb, are imperfect; rightly heard, they are rhythmic triumphs.

Whether in the delicately intricate forms like the sonnet, in the art-concealing art of the song, or when the more virile demands of the drama with its medium of blank verse confront him, the difficulties are easily met and beauties take their place. Technic should be simply a deft, hidden way to produce a result, not a thing to parade for its own sake. Never, except in work so early as to be discarded by his judgment, did he err in this discrimination. Hence, his verse is conserved by his mastery of the *ars poetica*.

Another trait which makes his work admirable is the humanity, the love for fellow man which pulses through the song, growing notably strong at the close. Naturally, at first it is less general, expressed more often in some love lyric where the chosen one is addressed, or when friendship is

lauded. Later, this note becomes broader and deeper, until you hear in it a universal sentiment, the spirit of such a poem as "The Sons of Men."

This fine, fraternal note clarifies and gives red blood to work that otherwise, because of its delicate art and aloofness from vulgar and obvious themes, might have failed to reach a general audience.

It should be added that the sweetness and sanity of the song are notable characteristics. Often subtle in form and feeling as it may be, there is an underlying common-sense, an insistent and instinctive avoidance of anything morbid or degenerate; nay, more; there is the frequent play of a charming, sunny humor when in lighter moods the poet depicts the gladness and grace of life. Alleviations come to him by way of human intercourse, through the gentle ministries of nature, or from the divinating whispers of the soul; he translates them for our pleasure. The verse is never misty, meaningless, pessimistic. Of course it has, at times, the exquisite sadness of all true poetry; a poet is a poet, among other reasons, because he feels more keenly than is common the dissonance between our dreams and our doings. But whoever turns to Arthur Upson's writings for the bizarre and the dubious will be disappointed. His appeal is to that robuster taste which outlasts mere literary fashions.

Last of all, and best of all, permeating this work like an atmosphere, is its spirituality. Upson bravely accepted the facts of life and showed their symbolic significance. He realized that the test of living is soul growth, that we are here on a battle ground where victory is for him whose character is strengthened by the struggle. He lets us hear, above the din of conflict, and set to luring music, the "still small voice" that speaks the coveted "well done." While enamoured of beauty that is of the eyes, he is aware that the high-

est beauty is of the soul; that the phrases "the holiness of beauty" and "the beauty of holiness" are interchangeable. In lyrics like "To a Poet," "The Rival Quests" and many another we feel that we are getting more than phrasing and melody and the deft handling of forms; namely, a message for the spirit; that here again poetry, the divine art, is justified of one of her children.

In a word, Arthur Upson is an aristocrat of verse, whose song has in it somewhat of seership. So it must appear to a contemporary. For this very reason he was less known at his death than might have been, had his appeal been of the catchpenny kind. But already his own sort knew him; warm words of appreciation have been spoken by Mr. Stedman, Mr. Gilder, Mr. Aldrich and yet others. Wrote Mr. Aldrich in a private letter:

"I am afraid he is too fine for immediate popularity; but that does n't matter. It is not the many but the few that give a man his place in literature. The many are engaged in canning meat and manipulating pious life insurance companies."

Time, the great corrective, will take care of that. Meanwhile, here is the work, with its wistful loveliness, its quiet, unprotesting, unsensational perfection, its touch of the pathos which must inevitably hover over the incomplete, its lasting dower of Beauty. Such a message may always be thankfully received, whether from the hand of one of the masters whose position has long been assured, or from one nearer, and less clearly seen because so close, whose tongue nevertheless is touched with the same sacred fire:

> "Here a boy he dwelt, through all the singing season,
> And ere the day of sorrow departed as he came."

AT THE SIGN OF THE HARP

FOREWORD

BY A REGULAR LODGER

The Gentle Reader shall labor under no Misapprehension: the Verse in this Book disclaims the lofty title and rank of *Poesy*. It is, as it were, a Record of Echoes from many-keyed Melodies heard by a back-stairs Lodger in an old rambling Inn. This Inn is one not come upon in the main Thoroughfare and for that reason those who haunt its Chimney Nook find perennial Charm in the quaint Restfulness pervading it.

Down a green Yew Lane a Sonnet's length, or thereabouts, from the Highway, one discovers the brown, moss-edged gables of the Harp Tavern, whose Rafters have rung with sweetest Music from the days of *Sidney* and *Spenser* to our own. It cannot escape one, for the Lane turns at the Tavern Gate and then, too, there is the ancient Sign. It is a place of Solace, tidy Hearths and rare Bread and Ale; and so sweet is the Companionship withal, that many a day the present Scribe has overtarried there, to the sad neglect of his proper Duties.

A Winter's Night there, my Masters, is good for the Soul of Man! A roaring Fire of oaken billets

attracts its circle of Deep Chairs and into each Chair is sunken a Contented Guest. Nightlong a whimpering Wind is at the Casement; nightlong the Sign on its hinge and the ancient Yews groan together, and the girders of the sturdy Hostel crack in the tightening clutch of vindictive Frost. The housed Heartlover is wrapped in a Luxury these contrasting Asperities of the Season serve to intensify, for whilst the Brook in the Meadow becomes hard and still without, congealed Springs of Song melt delightsomely within; Mugs go round; Talk babbles on, till at length one retires drowsily happy into some lavendered Chamber of Sleep.

From time to time these Pieces were dropped into an old *Portmanteau* which had become so stuffed with the ilk that the Jaws of the distorted Receptacle refused to meet. For no other reason, therefore, than to relieve the Poor Thing of its Embarrassment, have these been taken out and done into a little Book. And if this be not reason enough, why, then, those who read it may invent more; for the World still has a Few not grown too busy to nurse the old Love, frank and warm, for their accustomed Chimney Corner at the Sign of the Harp.

'NEATH THE WALLS OF NAISHAPUR

"A JUG of wine, a loaf and thou" —
Oh, to sit beneath the bough
Singing in the wilderness,
With a southern breeze to bless
Book and bloom and purple lure
'Neath the walls of Naishapur!

Oh, to feel the subtle Spring
Rouse the fire in everything,
As she once in Khorassan
Round the old rose-gardens ran,
Keeping with the Poet-wooer
Her sweet tryst at Naishapur!

Roses turn a tenderer red —
Once they circled Omar's head; —
Southwinds fetch a plaintive psalm
From the shrine of old Khayyam,
Taught them on some pilgrim tour
By nightingales at Naishapur.

Otherwhere the Springtime may
Leave her old familiar way,
And the nightingale forget
How to sing an eyelash wet —
But the scent and song endure
'Neath the walls of Naishapur.

Life were life enough to close
With a quatrain and a rose;
Death were death enough to be
Shut away from such as he
Who for both found ample cure
'Neath the walls of Naishapur.

DUST O' BOOKS

Slantwise one long starbeam finds
Access through the jealous blinds,
Lingeringly, lance at rest
On the Poet loved the best,
Feeling softly down the shelves
Where my books reveal themselves;
And, beneath its trembling glow,
Faint, fine blooms, like plum-mist show —
Dust o' Books, I love you so!

Wrecks of olden minstrelsy
When the lilting tide is lee,
Ride at flood into our cove
To protest unaltered love;
Or, diffused into the night,
Some sweet Spirit of the Past,
Poising in an airy flight,
Doth behold a home at last
Here with books he fathered when
He was tangible to men
— Mew *his* soul up in some sphere
When he might be basking here! —
Now the Lady Moon looks in,
Searching with her finger thin

To detect the gentle fluff
From some rose of long ago,
Which, once found, doth seem enough
To provoke her tenderest glow —
Dust o' Books, she loves you so!

Watch Diana set the name
Of her lover-bard aflame,
Through the casement golden streets
Flooding to the name of Keats!
And the silken dust she tries
That on my table-Browning lies,
Pollen of the Reddest Rose
Our Parnassus-garden grows.
Dust? Nay, their own ashes rest
On the works their love caressed:
Out of linen and levant
Thoughts of masters emanant,
From the outer wash of air
Their sweet ashes settled there!
This is creed to all of us
And dust of earth, unluminous,
Hath no gold like this we know
Of an otherworldly glow —
Dust o' Books, we love you so!

PRAISE OF RAIN

I LOVE the rainy day, the quiet room,
  The books, the pictures and the glowing fire;
  I love the nursing of a dear desire
And all the fancies weaving in the gloom.

I love the daylong woodland wind anear
  Down sodden slopes and dripping avenues;
  For, come the twilight, he hath tuned the flues
Into sweet panpipes, wonderful to hear.

I love the friend that reads to me again
  Old stories 'mid the soothing monotone
  Of singing flame and eave-caught sprites that moan
And murmur through the lisping of the rain.

And each pale joy the dreary day unnests
  Is driven within the compass of this hall
  Where, fearing still the Autumn's hunting-call,
They hide themselves within our warming breasts.

Ere evening lamp is brought and while along
  The firelit floor dance faeries of the grate,
  There comes a museful interpause: I wait
And tap the pane and hum a twilight song:

The day is dying,
  The rain is kind,
Leaves are flying
  Before the wind.

Drops are blotted
  Upon the pane,
Red leaves have spotted
  The swimming lane.

The rain is gentle;
  It brings to me
A transcendental
  Ecstasy.

When it is hushing
  I hear the wind:
This storm a-rushing
  Is kind, is kind.

It is kind to the reader;
  It brings to him
The sough i' the cedar,
  The creak o' the limb,

The pool-caught splatter
  Of storm-pluckt cones,
The wind's wet patter
  On pavement stones

That rise in the darking
Chill of night
To meet him harking
In warmth and light.

And in it there lingers,
Above, below,
Touch of rain fingers
In tremolo.

These days are after
Old ways of years —
Within is laughter,
Without are tears;

Within is greeting,
Without, the rain —
And hearts are beating
Both sides the pane.

Now dim are tracing
Of twig and tree;
The fire on the casing
Shines ruddily.

Leaves go flying
Before the wind;
Day is dying,
The rain is — kind!

"THE LITTLE WHITE HOME WITH THE LAWN"

"The Little White Home with the Lawn,"
It is ever so far away,
But into its midst I am drawn,
By the sweetness it seems to embay.

I KNOW it though I have not seen
Even its fringe of leafy green:
A little stoop with roses tied
Along its benches either side,
In-latticed cosily with vines
Wherethrough the morning thinly shines;
Above, a classic pediment
Along whose stately Doric lines
Lurks consciousness of high descent;
A tar-walk swerving to the gate
Where tall syringa chaplets wait,
Underneath whose emerald line,
Fay-filched from a thorn-tree's stores,
Atalanta's apples shine
Luresome down the fairy course.
(Are there nightly races run
With some sprite Milanion?)

This is every whit a home,
Just the place a heart would come
With its sorrow and its pain,
From the city's toil and stain —
Just the place a heart might stay
And lark it through a summer day.
I have not seen it, yet I know
That it stands and waits me so.

A RONDEAU ON HER MECHLIN FAN

Her Mechlin fan night after night I dare
And graciously each night she holds it there
  As some proud queen a scepter to her slave
  Might lift to reassure the trembling knave. —
Faith, and it well becomes her noble air!

Oh, 't is a wee thing: ivory mounts with rare
Light wreathings a Titania might wear;
  But ah, it wields a fate in every wave,
    Her Mechlin fan!

Were I to dash to bits this slim affair
And, staking all, my mutiny declare,
  What might I gain? — the welcome that I crave,
  A tear-washed haven or a smile-sunned grave?
(In either case I 'd have to buy somewhere
    A Mechlin fan!)

THE FLORENTINE FRAME

By the walls of old Firenze,
Loved of Fra Angelico,
Through what summer necromancy
Did the carver-poet go

When, this tender wood selecting,
He so deftly in their place
Wrought these gracile forms, perfecting
Such a frame for such a face?

Or, amid sweet shadows moving
On the heights of Fiesole,
Carved he thus his heart's great loving,
Tendrilwise, rememberingly;

While below through leafy lattice
Shines the Arno to the sea —
Westward to the maiden that is
Smiling from her shelf on me.

Had he caught a premonition
Of these features, carving so,
He'd have sought no saintlier vision
Of the good Angelico!

AFTER THE OPERA

Curtain and the moment's pause,
  Then the stirring of the crowd
And their chatter, but there was
  Still the music crying loud —
Violins that never had
Seemed to me so tender-mad.

True, the orchestra was gone
  And the people and the light,
But the music sounded on
  As I rode into the night —
Violins and Elsa's face
Prayed across the starlit space.

A PORTRAIT

Erewhile in a dream I saw
  Fleetingly, a face,
And on waking tried to draw
  Something of its grace;

But the lines my patient pen
  Traced across the sheet,
Could in no wise fetch again
  Features half so sweet.

Haunted years that hurried round
  Ne'er an answer brought,
Till I saw this face and found
  More than all I sought.

AMABEL

Last night when day had sunk to rest
And he was waiting at the gate,
When tenderly against his breast
He felt her pulses palpitate,
There stood in heaven a wondering star
That gazed and gazed at Amabel,
Till, drunk with love, it leaned so far
It lost its parapet and fell.

Then through the balsams came the breeze,
And all the little sounds of night,
Each singing that her heart was his
And humming in a long delight.
The word was trembling on his tongue —
He tried but could not say farewell;
How *could* he leave while heaven swung
One star that winked at Amabel!

SONGS

I

SAY, LITTLE MAIDEN

I

Say, little maiden with dewdrop eyes
Caught in a moonbeam's silver trace,
What is the meaning of this surprise
Written across your lily-face?
Thrice has the cricket said good-night
In the sleepy valley below you there,
And still I look at the starry light
That gleams in your golden hair.
Maiden afloat on the emerald stream
Of the mighty Slumber Sea,
In all of the beautiful dreams you dream
Is there one little place for me?

II

What do you see in the wonderlands
Along the starbright thoroughfare,
Led by the touch of spirit hands,
And what do the spirits whisper there?

Are there silver worlds we know not of
They lead your immaculate soul among?
Are there songs they sing of an unknown love
That never on earth were sung?
And do they as they hang o'er the bloom-set stream
To loop you a diadem,
Ask, too, if in all of the dreams you dream
Perchance there is one for them?

II

GLORIANA

In a country of moonshine and shadow,
Dwelt a maid 'neath a mistletoe bough,
And her hair went in folds of rich auburns and golds,
Like a sunset wound over her brow.

Gloriana, how I love you!
Won't you, won't you promise to be mine?
Stars are dim to-night above you,
Gloriana, how you shine!

Each night as she tripped through the valley,
The moon on the tip of the fir
Wove itself a pale shroud out of shimmering cloud
And left all the shining to her.

Gloriana, how I love you!
Won't you, won't you promise to be mine?
Stars are dim to-night above you,
Gloriana, how you shine!

III

MEIN STERN

Du, Du bist meines Lebens Stern,
So hell und rein bist Du;
Du strahlst mir durch die Wolken fern
Mit sanftem Leuchten zu,
Und ich, ich folge bis ich lern'
Der Liebe heil'ge Ruh'.
Und ueberall wohin ich geh',
In Feld und Thal, auf Berg und See,
Mit wunderbarem Sternenschein
Du segnest mir das Leben ein!

Es giebt Nichts in der ganzen Welt
So schoen wie dein Gesicht
Das auf den Weg so lieblich faellt
Mit heitrem Himmelslicht;
Auf Berg und See, in Thal und Feld
Die Glorie fehlt mir nicht.
Denn ueberall wohin ich geh',
In Feld und Thal, auf Berg und See,
Mit wunderbarem Sternenschein
Du segnest mir das Leben ein!

SINCE THE CHILDREN LEARNED TO SING

(TO A TEACHER)

No more in wide and tuneless ways
Does wistful childhood throng,
Or file as in the other days
In voicelessness along;
For now the smile of service plays
Upon the lips of song;

And, down those deep recesses whence
A child his love may bring,
There streams a silver opulence
Of voices carolling,
Since by your music's eloquence
The children learned to sing.

Of all the lovely lore that slips
Into a childheart so,
The songs that linger on the lips
And sweeter seemed to grow,
Shall be first come of comradeships
And prove the last to go.

And thus, of all the after-bloom
Their thoughts will backward fling
When larger tasks their place assume
And memory voices ring,
The best will be for you of whom
The children learned to sing.

IN MEMORY LOCK'D

"OPHELIA — *'T is in my memory lock'd*
And you yourself shall keep the key of it."

TO ESTELLE

Sweet, for the days that were I 'd give
All the days that are yet to live;
For the bloom once lining the deep, white tree
I 'd barter the fruit of the years to be —
For the first blush-petals that drift and blur
In the old dear days that were.

Sweet, for the days that were I 'd thread
The maze of the years unanswerèd,
If, in those shadows and after all,
I could hear thy whisper return my call,
Or the satin sound of thy nearing stir,
Just once, as in days that were.

SOUL OF BAZIL

I

THERE she lay so still and white
In the tender folds of night,
Three white tapers at her head
Lighted for the saintly dead,
Over which methought did shine
Yet another, light divine,
Brighter and more calmly clear —
Soul of Bazil hovering near.

II

Soul of Bazil, white and whole,
In upon our sorrow stole
As, beside the wreathéd pall,
We were watching; and a call
Half a whisper, half refrain
Of some wondrous angel-strain
Low but clear, suffused the gloom
Of the consecrated room:

"I am resting, resting well —
Should you weep for this?
Could you grasp it I would tell
What my welcome is."

III

Roses grew beside the wall
To twine her resting place withal;
Violets in whispering bands
Bloomed for Bazil's folded hands;
Someone wrought these candlesticks
And the claspéd crucifix
Just to light her home a way,
Just to lift her into day.

IV

Not forgotten, little one,
Shall the works be you have done;
Toiled nor these frail hands in vain
Nor the weary woman-brain
Dwelling in the troubled head
That is now quite comforted;
Little child, the hearts you knew
Now are images of you!

V

Roses that remember well —
Violets that used to tell
All about you, each to each,
Needing so no priest to preach —
Carvéd cross and candles — all
Evermore upon you call;

And, self-answering, seem to say
To us when we bow to pray:

"She is resting, resting well —
Should you weep for this?
Could you grasp it she would tell
What her welcome is."

TO BERTHA, SLEEPING

(B. E. C., DIED IN PARIS, AUGUST, 1898)

Home at last from the overseas,
Ah, Bertha, what welcomes strange are these!
Strange yet tender, and sweeter far
Than all of our mortal welcomes are;
Arms are open, arms cool and deep;
Kisses are given, the kisses of sleep.

Tenderly there in the dear home sod
Are resting your feet where of old they trod;
Folded your hands in the meadow where
They gathered the daisies; — and loosed the hair
Where over and over the breeze may tell
How lately it loved those riches well.

Ah, but the eyes that I used to know
And the lips that were smiling, are smiling so!
Even your laughter and lilt and bloom
Follow you down to the restful tomb.
Warm, happy France! 'T is the land for you
To have sought the gates of the Happier through.

A SEPTEMBER'S DAY

(FORT SNELLING)

I HEARD the river past the fortress sing
When the wide woods were faintly yellowing,
And up the hills and through the autumn air
The blur of dreams was drifting everywhere.
The wind caught up a wandering bugle tone
From the green court of some far barrack blown,
Whose startled echoes, over tower and tree,
Pelted from cliff to cliff right silverly.
Past many a rocky headland toward the town
The Mississippi swept benignly down,
His wimpled waters glassing brokenly
Red leaves and gold and sunny fields of sky.

Crowning the southern brink, against the wood
The old, six-sided tower is cameoed,
Guard of the dim horizon's level sweep,
Gray sentinel of a valley, still and deep,
Along whose leafy lap, half hidden, glide
The sun-kissed waves of Minnesota's tide.
Verging the further heights, Mendota lifts
Her quaint, brown gables through the woodland rifts;
And over all the scene there seems to play
The mellow light of some lost Yesterday.

I leaned far out against the sightly wall,
To hear the wild birds through the valley call,
And, from the woodbine on the parapet
That wreathed in many a windy coronet,
I heard, or in my daydream thought I heard,
The reminiscent carols of a bird
Singing me such faint music as would fit
Into the delicate thought preceding it:

September is her same old self,
  Carmine, gray and gold again,
As she down the foreland shone
  Fourscore years ago and ten.

Here the Island breaks the stream
  And the mingled waters flow
On together as they ran
  Ninety years and more ago.

Still the ragged ledge is cut
  On the amber Autumn sky,
And the melancholy breeze
  Whispers echoingly by.

Still the maple twigs are traced
  On the limestone buttress sharp,
And the oak leaves flutter down
  From the russet counterscarp.

But the hands that patient wrought
In the wildernesses then,
Shaped their own oblivion
Fourscore years ago and ten;

Now their man-forgotten names,
Once within the valley said,
By the woodland birds are sung,
By the breeze rememberéd.

There are forms along the wall,
Footprints in untrodden ways,
Sounds the busy morning winds
Up around the treetops raise.

Does the lonely sentinel,
To his lofty beat confined,
Hear or see these traces? Nay,
Man alone is deaf and blind.

But the hands that patient wrought
In the unblazed wilderness,
Nature, through the bird and breeze,
Doth forever repossess.

September is her same old self,
Carmine, gray and gold again,
As she down the foreland shone
Fourscore years ago and ten.

THE INWARD SERVICE

"LAERTES — *For Nature, crescent, does not grow alone*
In thews and bulk; but as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal."

ON ROCK RIVER—EVENING

On such a river, in such a night
As lifted old longings up to light,
In the liquid, low, melodious sound
Of oars and waters interwound,
In the stars' young lights that shimmered by
Through underchannels of changing sky,
Like those of some strange lantern feast
On sacred rivers of the east—
A man might throttle earth's whimpering blight,
On such a river, in such a night,
And half his battle and all his care
Might dwindle into the shadows there.

By some still river such as this,
Ruffled by a zephyr-kiss,
Turning ever so the eyes
Rest where new embankments rise;
Sanctified from daylit streams
By a holy touch of dreams,
And trailing on her trembling breast
The lingering opal of the west—
Let life regain her emphasis
By some still river such as this,
Whilst half the battle and all the care
Dwindle into the shadows there.

THE LOST BROTHER

Falters now the storm-song,
Winds are a-waning,
Only the steady rain
Keeps on complaining.

Throw up the blinds now,
Fetch me the candles;
Hark! 't is a footstep,
Touch of his sandals.

List! ah, an Someone come
Out of the storming,
He will find welcome here,
Welcome and warming!

Hushed is the wind-song,
Silent remaining —
Only the mournful rain
Keeps on complaining.

Were he to come to-night,
Brother and brother,
Heart warm to heart warm,
Forgiving each other —

Were he to follow
The light I am placing,
Up through the darkness
My woodpath tracing.

. . . . . .

Dead is the rain-song,
Silent remaining;
Only a lonely soul
Keeps on complaining.

AFTER THE SINKING OF THE "MERRIMAC"

(1898)

QUITE simply do the Great-at-Heart
Their creed of life confess
They pray no chance, they know no art
Save Self-forgetfulness.

No casual hand of favoring Fate
Doth kindle life's high star;
'T is true we may not all be great,
But more can be than are.

THE DIFFERENCE

The Virtuoso dined with friends
And made them serve ambitious ends;
He shaded off his tones a bit
To bring them to his patrons' wit.

The Second Fiddle, all alone,
Searched his Amati tone by tone,
Dwelling apart because he found
No voices like his fiddle's sound.

Both had the skill of equal pains —
Only the former's name remains.

THE OLD CATHEDRAL

Eloquent of the Evermore
The old cathedral calmly stands
And blesses, as with outstretched hands,
The city plodding past its door.

The furrowed steps, the walls' gray stone,
The archéd windows, plain and high,
That snatch white squares of sunlight down
From the brimmed bosom of the sky,

Are symbols of the hoary faith
Whose steps lead up a footworn way,
And through whose misnamed window, Death,
There glances the abundant day.

Within, vague whisperings of hope
Go trembling by where, echo-trod,
Prayer-crowded incense pathways grope
Their dim way upward unto God.

Though priestly chant may backward roll,
Heavy with weight of conscious bass,
The faltered prayer of one faint soul
Mounts the light incense to His face.

Here the mute, quivering heart may rest,
However slight its wisdom be,
And beat its cares out on the breast
Of an omniscient Sympathy.

VENTURE

Where such haze as light winds carry
Up the eviternal blue
Cuts the orbit round his eyrie,
Fearlessly the eagle flew:
Soul, why in thy cloudlet tarry,
When a stroke would wing thee through?

THE GREATER TREASURE

My rarest Quarto, to have been
With Chaucer at the Tabard Inn
When April with her showers sweet
Spread blossoms for the Pilgrim's feet!

My choicest Sèvres, to have heard
Poor Palissy's ecstatic word
When, after years, the sullen kiln
Responded to his patient skill!

My Stradivarius, to know
The Master's thought when, long ago
In quaint Cremona, first there came
The intimations of his fame!

My all — books, porcelain and Strad,
For something sweet these craftsmen had:
The Poet's spirit, blithe and true,
The patience of the other two!

WESTWIND SONGS

I

HEART AND SOIL

ARLINGTON

No tap of drum nor sound of any horn
  Shall call them now from this unbattled height,
  No more the picket dreads the traitor night,
Nor would the marcher tired delay the morn.
Fell some upon the field with victory torn
  From weakening grasp; and some before the fight,
  Doomed by slow fevers or the stray shot's spite;
And some old wounds through quiet years have worn.
And all are folded now so peacefully
  Within her breast whose glory was their dream —
  From her own bloody fields, from isles extreme,
From the long tumult of the land and sea —
  Where lies the steel Potomac's jewelled stream
Like the surrendered sword of Memory.

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY

(The first celebration in the new century)

EARTH, that hast countless aeons of swift days
Spun from thy poles — and like a mote been swirled
Fleet years about thy Master Orb — and hurled
With all thy starry fellows into space
Silent and irresistible on the face
Of heavens and of heavens' heavens unfurled —
And yet remainest our remembering world,
Our kindly home and our familiar place, —
Thou dost not fail, sweet, immemorial Earth,
To number o'er thy sons that were thy kings;
Chants royal raisest thou among the rings
Celestial of old stars for their great worth
Whose birth was not as is our common birth,
But was foreplanned with elemental things.

THE SEQUOIA, "WILLIAM McKINLEY"

(CHRISTENED OCTOBER 21, 1901)

He who in dying blessed the peaceful trees
That lulled the slow grief of the lapsing year
Towards tranquil death, is best remembered here.
He leaves a name that shall make holier these
Huge temple pillars where the organing breeze,
Always at requiem, fills the atmosphere,
And does to their eternal roof uprear
Perpetual music of great memories.
Men raised rich temples in the days antique
To serve memorial unto virtues wan
Beside his. Him no rites shall celebrate
Gold-bought, ephemeral as their altar-reek —
But, while time is, he here in solemn state
Shall hold fit place in Nature's pantheon.

BENJAMIN-CONSTANT'S PAINTING OF QUEEN VICTORIA

Apart, with centuries which she doth illume,
The sunset on her face, around her throne
Tapestried legends and heraldic stone,
Silent she sits within that gorgeous gloom.
Eyes narrowed in far retrospect assume
Sorrows of empire. Not her dream alone
Occident glories, Orients homage-prone,
But more and more of Lucknow and Khartum.
Along the past with heavy-lidded eyes
She looks as one who knows the vision well,
A quiet woman whom stately powers compel
To splendor and to silent sacrifice —
For in the clare-obscure of her deep years
What counter of gains hath likewise told her tears?

WHEAT ELEVATORS

Castles, or Titans' houses, or huge fanes
Of ancient gods that yet compel men's fear —
What powers, what pomps, do these betoken here
Looming aloft upon the plough-seamed plains?
Souls of ripe seasons and spirits of sweet rains
Flock hither; and the sinewy, yellow year
Heaps their high chambers with Pactolian gear
More precious than those golden Lydian grains.
Nor fortresses, nor demi-gods' abodes,
These are upraised to well-feared deities
Whose power is iron, and whose splendid sway
Is undisputed now as when great Rhodes,
And Tyre, and Carthage, flourished serving these,
Or Joseph stored Egyptian corn away.

FAILURES

They bear no laurels on their sunless brows,
Nor aught within their pale hands as they go;
They look as men accustomed to the slow
And level onward course 'neath drooping boughs.
Who may these be no trumpet doth arouse,
These of the dark processionals of woe,
Unpraised, unblamed, but whom sad Acheron's flow
Monotonously lulls to leaden drowse?
These are the Failures. Clutched by Circumstance,
They were — say not too weak! — too ready prey
To their own fear whose fixéd Gorgon glance
Made them as stone for aught of great essay; —
Or else they nodded when their Master-Chance
Wound his one signal, and went on his way.

THE SOBBING WOMAN

I HEARD a woman sobbing in the night
Against a casement high. And as she cried
Our heartless world's deliberate homicide,
Our tragic badinage, our mortal slight
Of elemental claims, and the dark plight
Of the poor I faced there, rigid, open-eyed.
Across the unechoing street in silence died
Her weary moaning. Whether in her sight
Some star appeared to soothe her present pain
With memories sweet, or quiet sleep's strong hand
Blunted her keen-edged woe, or other fear
Came smothering down too close for sob or tear,
I could not guess; — some Fate may understand
That spins unseen her endless umber skein.

EXEMPTION

Us would-be wise they mock — those from of old
Who down the shuddering centuries with no sound
Tread by men evenly as keen souls that hound
A slayer. When the days turn strange and cold
Who of us up dim, woody byways hold
No protest with vague beings? Thick around
What mover among multitudes are not found
Close but untouched companions? — In a fold
Of a still, midnight, winter hill one time
Came they about me! Fearful as I stood,
The moon streamed up before me in a wood,
And lit a frozen pool where swayed sublime
In world-forgetfulness and young, swift joy,
A skater, a wild, singing, thoughtless boy.

GOLDEN ROD

Doubtless 't was here we walked but yesterday,
Seeing not any beauty save the green
Of meadows, or, where slipt the brook between,
A ribbon of blue and silver; yet the way
Is strange; in golden paths I seem astray.
Do you remember, comrade, to have seen
Aught forward in these meadows that should mean
A culmination in such fair display?
We noticed not the humble stalks amid
The many roadside grasses; but, it seems,
They were preparing this! And, when their dreams
Were ripe for doing, they could no more be hid
Than golden thoughts that bloom to action when
Their hearts make heroes out of common men.

GOSPEL OF THE FIELDS

Have you ever thought, my friend,
As daily you toil and plod
In the noisy paths of man,
How still are the ways of God?

Have you ever paused in the din
Of traffic's insistent cry,
To think of the calm in the cloud,
Of the peace in your glimpse of sky?

Go out in the growing fields
That quietly yield you meat,
And let them rebuke your noise
Whose patience is still and sweet.

They toil their aeons — and we
Who flutter back to their breast,
A handful of clamorous clay,
Forget their silence is best!

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

Aloof by something hidden held,
Though yearning for companionship,
He toiled; and need, that so compelled,
Wrung no word from his lip.

Some said he scorned the human part;
Others, that self was all his care;
A few saw suffering in his heart,
But shrank from entering there.

They let him tread his lonely mile
And toil apart as best he might,
Nor sought a meaning in the smile
He wore into the night.

He died one day; and when they found
Him smiling in his final rest,
An old, immedicable wound
They saw within his breast.

And those who oft with eye of stone
Denied his soul their comfort's bliss,
Said, "Why, if we had only known!
We had good anodynes for this!"

OCTOBER SONG

If this be October 't is the maid I 've sought so long!
I have traced her through the dying
Summer with a song;
I have seen her garments flying
Nights in June
Down the crimson West beneath the moon!

If this be October, then, this dark-eyed, ruddy maid,
With the amber in her tresses,
All in gold arrayed,
Let me sing yet while she dresses
The still woods
And the scarlet sumach solitudes!

Let me sing, nor think of gloom, the while she crowns her brow
With the woodbine reddening
Round the yellow bough!
Nothing sorrowful or saddening
Brings she here,
Only ripe fulfilments of the year!

IN THE WOOD

No shrill praise nor thanks confessed
  Clamorous to be understood,
Troubles here the Sabbath rest
  Of the solitary wood.
(There are ways to live and be
Praiseful, thankful, silently.)

Flowers fear not their God will blight
  If they shout no praises loud;
Trees attain their normal height
  Waving worship to a cloud.
(Why should mortals anxiously
Reassure the Deity?)

Thanks there are in everything
  Growing down the woodland way,
Rendered through developing
  Fullest life and freest sway.
(Let me find how I may be
Thankful unobtrusively.)

IN OCTOBER

THE maples their old sumptuous hues resume
Around the woodland pool's bright glass, and strong
The year's blue incense and recession-song
Sweep over me their music and perfume.
Dear Earth, that I reproached thee in my gloom
I would forget as thou forgot'st; I long
To make redress for such a filial wrong
And praise thee now for all thy ruddy bloom!
So fond a mother to be used so ill!
Yet this poor heart of mine hath ever been
Prey to its own unwarranted alarms,
Shall fret, and beg forgiveness so, until
Thou fold my thankless body warmly in
And draw me back into thy loving arms.

THE UNFORGIVING

The unforgiving one forgot
And sinned, for he was flesh and blood,
And deemed it cruel his dearest friend
Forgave him not, nor understood.

Long pored he o'er his wrongs until
From his high window once he saw
An outcast whom his arm had thrust
Beneath the ban of certain law.

Him hailed he in a frantic hope
As one whose woes he would repair —
But far and faint came his reply:
"It is beyond thee now. Forbear!"

Then in he called his righteous friend
And cried: "Thou wilt not yet forgive?
I pass the curse along to thee,
That thou mayst sin — and know — and live!"

THE TWO HEARTS

I

"So long my heart hath held its full of joy,
Bring on your tears! I am made strong by these
Sweet cordials of blood-stirring memories;
Some pain, perhaps, is better, lest they cloy."

II

"So long my heart, the chill abode of pain,
Hath been contracted narrowly, I know
That now this hot, new joy it drinketh so
Must shatter it. O Heart, drink quick again!"

"ALL'S WELL"

This in a dream at night: A flying start —
A waving of white arms — a shroud — a bell —
A sudden turning of a trusted heart —
Some frantic errand over peak and fell:
At dawn you wake: All's well!

This in a life. The strain for what is not,
A snatching at the sunbeam in your cell —
The hope that fades — the sacrifice forgot —
The frozen smile — the chime that dies a knell:
At dawn you wake: All's well!

THE OPEN FURROW

It rains to-day; the dark clouds lend
All earth deep sorrow,
And heavy blasts of grief descend
On field and new-turned furrow,
Which wait the springing seed to take
Upon the sunny morrow.

It rains to-day; the soul from gloom
One light doth borrow:
Near blessings through the mists uploom
Above the open furrow,
And welcome give the healthful seed
Sown there by holy sorrow.

It rains to-day; but in the dark
The new-turned furrow
Doth wait the song which meadow-lark
From heaven above shall borrow
With which to hail the waving grain
That springs upon the morrow.

AN ENVOY

THERE is a River thou and I in storm
Or in the purple windy dusk have watched;
And thou, when the quick surface of the stream
Fled backward from his course before that breath,
Hast said, "Oh, see the River flowing up!"
For thus it seemed. And then thine eyes have smiled.
O Mother, there 's a river floweth up —
A sort of little tributary stream
To the great seas — where clouds look and the morn,
Where goes the wind, and many a wind hath gone,
That, Mother, is the river of my song
Whose running is to thee, though most it seem
Those waters for another bourne are bound
And there be quiet moments when all airs
Suspend, and strong the current is revealed,
And sudden to each other's eyes we turn.

FAME

In quiet, day by day,
Does worth to greatness win its upward way.

Alone to him who toiled
The arduous steps undaunted and unspoiled

'T is granted to emerge
Upon the envied goal's exalted verge.

Unbidden then comes Fame,
An issue of the journey, not its aim.

IRREVOCABLE

Can the smiling ocean waft
  Into port again
Yesternight's storm-shattered craft? —
  Is all smiling vain?

Can the lips once proved untrue
  Ever quite recall
Old-time trust to hearts that knew
  Once their truth as all?

TO A SICK ACTOR

(DECEMBER, 1899)

Without the northwind, sad and stern,
How could we love of fireside learn?
The sun would shine unthanked if we
Had never known inclemency.
Thus come the clouds to show how true
A nation's friendship shines for you.

TO ALGOL

"Such light was his," so may she dreaming say
In thought of one beneath thy changeful glow.
"Such light was his when in the long ago
He used to fret the night out with his lay
Half-finished, and, forestalling the faint day,
Creep from his couch while slipt the wan moon low
For some poetic glimmer, sweet and slow,
O'er which he hovered till the East was gray.
Such light was his — and then he used to wait
Long nights in darkness at the very gate
Against whose far side beat the utmost light,
Till, wearied straining at those bars in vain,
He fell on dreams of light that went again
To leave him starting in the empty night."

IDENTITY

Trust me; I must be myself.
And, if thou 'rt the friend I thought thee,
All thy doubts of me will rest
By the open heart I brought thee,
Unconfessed.

Trust me; thou shalt be thyself.
In no deed wherein thou movest
Shall a curious question pry. —
And thou 'lt thank me if thou lovest
As do I.

THREE SONGS FROM THE LIGHTHOUSE TOWER

(ONTARIO)

I saw him climb the lighthouse tower;
The sea was singing of the day,
The East was pink with promises,
And all the West was sullen gray.
He gazed to East and he gazed to West,
(And oh, there was a sea light-blown!)
He strained his eyes to dim sky-line
Then pressed my hand within his own:

SONG

The kindly act, the worthy strife,
Are infinitesimals upward bent,
The slow, sure growth of a noble life
Whose God will reckon each increment.
Try and try and try:
What's the Shadow I'm pursuing?
After all that's said and done,
Something better waits my doing.

Be it at night when vaulted arch
Rang with the music of our feast,
Be it when, scattering her faint stars,
The silver Morning rode the East;
With him upon the lighthouse tower,
Or pink or gray or black the sky,
I only heard the songs he sang,
I saw alone his friendly eye.

SONG

There's tender thought to pay you back
For all the charities you lack;
There's a kind word to show you how
You might have made a friend but now.
I build my house and you build yours;
The winds and rains shall try us all —
'Tis its own timber that secures
Each from its own downfall.

I cannot see the lighthouse tower
For all the misty waste of years
Since ships have come and ships have gone
Across Ontarios of tears;
But as I look I see his hand
As though he waved from fields of air,
And feel the light wind of the sea
Waft me the songs he sings up there.

SONG

Headlands three
Guard the sea,
Faith, Hope, Charity :
Faith is firm against the storm ;
Hope is higher than its spray ;
Love, in bending to its arm,
Turns it pacified away.

THE WINDOW LAMP

(FOR A MONOTYPE)

The tremor of a transient light
Came softly through the yielding shade,
And startled into guilty flight
The phantoms loneliness had made.

This forest he had groped in long,
Not without heart, but all alone;
And now his soul sent forth a song —
For once he such a light had known.

"Somewhere 't is Home, it seems!" he said;
"Though strange am I in all this night;"
And then he blessed the hand that sped
The tremor of that transient light.

THE RETURN OF THE CRANES

(CRANE ISLAND)

When Spring's first tender signals come
The crane flock northward flies,
And their ancestral island home
Echoes again their cries.

Their long flight falters not nor rests
Till weary pinions fold
Where, round these lofty elm bough crests,
Fair waters sweep their gold.

And walking once where evening lay
Along this island wood,
I found, slow dying with the day,
One of that brotherhood.

The fingers of the gentle tide
Light touched him where he fell
Secure upon the beachy side
The young flock loves so well.

I stroked him and he lay as tame
As any dying thing,
While the dull westward sunset flame
Lit his long-broken wing.

Above, wide-circling in the air,
  His flock grieved not for one;
And he, alone, lay quiet there,
  His journey bravely done.

INCONSISTENCY

Once a Poet praised a Bird
That his praises overheard.

Thought the Bird, "Oh, rare delight!
I will sing to him all night!"

Long he sang, and somewhat shrill,
On the Poet's window-sill.

Till the Bard, grown wroth and grim,
Made a Silent Bird of him.

But next day this Poet signed
Sixteen sonnets ere he dined,

Having heard that someone is
Quoting certain lines of his.

SAYONARA, BRADI SAN!

Sayonara, Bradi San!
Not for Ind, nor glad Nippon,
Trim I any sail; yet wind
Vast horizon-breadths behind
Ways we friends have wandered late
To your buddhas consecrate.

Life, that for the moment showed
Glimpses of a common road,
Now dissevers us; you turn
Where the blinding glaciers burn,
And along perpetual ice
Skirt a snowy paradise.

Your peaks of rime and mountain walls
In sublime recessionals,
And, where chasm cedars lean,
All my River's mirror-green —
Scenes that many dawns evolve
Many dusks shall yet dissolve

Ere for us the *torri* shine
Ruddy welcome to your shrine,

Or the melancholy gong,
Sounding, bear our souls along.
But our day shall come anon,
With "*Ohayo, Bradi San!*"

Now I laze amongst the weeds
Where the big bee growls and feeds;
I the hammock's easy state
Assiduously cultivate,
And all night in doze and dream
Hear the wind along the stream.

Moves the River, wide and brown,
Far from village, far from town,
Through the oak wood's singing shades,
Past the painted palisades
Where the purply bergamot
And yarrow grace my tenting-spot.

Here the goldfinch flashes by,
And the rust-red butterfly
Tacks unsteady into port —
Some weed-lady's crimson court;
Green the ironwood tassels stir
Round the jewel tanager.

River, nights all moon-inlaid,
Hath bright rugs of foreign braid,

Of strange glistenings and glooms,
Stuffs from out the breezes' looms;
Rock-dyed in their gauzy thread
All day long they spread and spread.

There the shadow merchantmen
Moor to orient docks again;
As in some Burmese bazaar
Here the filmy fabrics are;
Bales strange-lettered here lie sunned
On the Nagasaki bund.

Sobs my tender mourning-dove
Through a cryptomeria grove,
While the bunting's deep blue wings
Seem fair Nikko blossomings,
And his tinkling notes, a bell
By some shrined and sacred well.

Spell o' the East! It glows and grows
Like a splendid burning rose
Round the heart you set it in!
All the clouds of distance thin
When its mystic, odorous sleep
Draws my soul within its deep!

Distance is no longer. These
Stars that gem the filigrees

Of the oak bough, and the bright
Tent-roof-sifted moon-delight,
They your Persian lamp, and fields
Are of your loved Jeypore shields.

For the good, the brave, the kind,
Ships a fair home-breeze shall find:
Yours again of nights to look
In some old familiar book
By your own lamp; I may stray,
Undeserving, far away.

And if there we meet not more,
Make for the Remembered Shore:
Thence I, or my ghost, shall hail
Joyfully your whitening sail
And, with soft airs of Nippon,
Sigh, "*Ohayo, Bradi San!*"

Lower Palisades,
Red Cedar River

TO THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC

(NATIONAL ENCAMPMENT, 1896)

Long has the cannon's angry mouth been mute,
  Muffled with garlands tearful Freedom twines
For brave hearts stilled that bounded to refute
  The slander on her shrines.

Victorious banners that through blackened air
  Went quivering in the war's hot agony,
Thrice sacred in their tatters and thrice fair,
  We furl full reverently:

Long cold is many a hand that held them high
  To shot and shell and battle's withering breath;
Speaks many a voice that woke the rallying cry
  Dumb eloquence of death.

But patriot thrill and proud remembrance start
  Not only at these trophies of long truce;
Not only here the quick, responsive heart
  Unstops its tear-brimmed cruse.

Something to lift us from the sordid aim
  Goes with you heroes of the outlived strife;
With you the present sweeps past heights of fame
  And soars to newer life.

To grasp the hands that, braving scorch and scar,
Broke slavery's chain to mend the bond of state,
That plunged into the seething pit of war
To grip our Country's fate;

To feel the pulse of Victory down the street
In measured cadence of the drum's quick roll,
The martial music thrilling high and sweet
Into the echoing soul:

To catch such flash from memory-kindled eyes
As met Death's eager face unflinchingly,
When out beneath gray, hope-forsaken skies
You charged for Liberty;

To hail you here — the Nation's heart outpours
Warm welcomes on your long triumphal way;
We wreathe your laurels on our city doors,
And fling them wide to-day.

Here in a fresh Republic, rich and new,
Peace rests her hand in Victory's furrowed palm —
A hand unscarred, but no less strong and true
Through years of blood-bought calm.

You sentries of her rights in doubt and dread,
The strong Republic's bounty she assures:
Her hearths your campfires for the years ahead,
Her hearts forever yours.

THE DEAD STATESMAN

(MARCH 13, 1901)

What of the man? His character was hewn
From patriot quarries on the height of seers;
With honors was his way to honors strewn
And calm indorsements of the critic years.

Who says "no crisis wrought his fiber's test"?
Why, from of old the exacting gods asked not
More proof of worth in heroes after-blessed
Than that they kept their love of duty hot!

What, then, are "crises"? They are action-peaks,
Decision's moments towering into light;
But what are they of which man never speaks
That rise by thousands just beneath our sight?

He knew the stress of state, the slow appeal
Of righteous aims, the thankless, unseen tasks,
Untiring service to the widest weal
And, save the glory, all a hero asks.

What of the silence? This must be for all.
But there's a grandeur in some silences;
And while the hush and mist around us fall
Our hearts are lifted for such life as his.

Up to *such* silence who would not be keen
To struggle finely and at length withdraw —
Henceforth in statutes wise to walk unseen,
And be a presence in the juster law !

RENAN

(ON A FLYLEAF OF MADAME DARMESTETER'S "LIFE")

Once in Montmartre I looked through the door of his tomb:
Outside lay the morning; within, dull twilight and dust.
I look in his Soul, round about me the mist and the gloom:
Within, serene, beams the light of the Pure and the Just!

II

EX LIBRIS

THE PATHMASTER

(1301–1901)

Ere Florence sowed that seed of woe
  Which yet her vain remorse doth reap
  The harvest of, and scorned to keep
Her Dante in her halls, (for so
  It is beyond the Apennines
  He sleeps where foreign Summer shines)

'T is said, before the factious Guelf
  Grew such a prodigal of spleen
  His quarrel with the Ghibelline
Had bred black schism in himself, —
  That Alighieri, wise and good,
  Among the priors of Florence stood

And him a chief the city made
  Of those whose strict official cares
  Should be in lanes and thoroughfares
To see the skilless builder stayed,
  To beautify the paths unclean,
  And render broad the straight and mean.

And further we this word do hold
From such scant fact as faintly stirs
From quills of chary chroniclers,
Those self-unconscious scribes of old, —
Unto that end his earnest prime
Bent Dante through the lotted time.

From this and like old writ we deem
That somewhere under palace eaves
The bard divine some relic leaves
Of widened ways: scarce more than dream. —
Had Florence not more weighty heeds
Than setting down a Dante's deeds?

What street of all thy ancient streets,
Thou Lily of the Arno, say,
Dost thou allure men down to-day
Where legend not that name repeats?
What road but some old memories tell
Of walls that serve it sentinel?

One road he paved (the records show)
"So that unlet at their desires,
The commons may approach the priors;"
Which was, men said, San Procolo.
But what saith one of subtler wit?
Far other Road than this was it!

O thou fair Dreamer of the Dead,
When Night with swift remembering-pangs
Her pale gold lamp above thee hangs,
And round thy windless squares is tread
Of phantom feet, — oh, whisper low
Which way his measured footsteps go.

For, maybe, at such magic hour
One might slip forth some quiet way,
While sleeps the body, to the gray,
Cold flagstone, thence by font and tower,
Till whisper saith: The Road was this
And passed the house of Beatrice.

Pale Singer of the Song Divine,
Who toiled and dreamt and sang apart,
Unto these latter days thy heart
Is better known; such song as thine
And the stern mark upon thy brow,
Then dark, are not all riddle now.

Six centuries, a hard, steep maze,
The world hath climbed since thou in shade
To Paradise thy soul-path laid
Through heart-ache and long, bitter days;
Till now, from loftier plane, it turns
Unto thy lore and, wondering, learns

Thy Road was that severer Love
  Outwidening to the place of Law
  Whereto we commons may withdraw
And prove our right to things above, —
  And over which, as to thy friends,
  Calm Beatrice her hand extends.

THOUGHT OF STEVENSON

High and alone I stood on Calton Hill,
  Above the scene that was so dear to him
  Whose exile dreams of it made exile dim.
October wooed the folded valleys till
In mist they blurred, even as our eyes upfill
  Under a too sweet memory; spires did swim,
  And gables rust-red, on the gray sea's brim —
But on these heights the air was soft and still.
Yet not all still: an alien breeze did turn
  Here as from bournes in aromatic seas,
As round old shrines a new-freed soul might yearn
  With incense to his earthly memories.
And then this thought: Mist, exile, searching pain,
But the brave soul is free, is home again!

FROM VAEA

(MARCH, 1899)

(One of the inscriptions on Stevenson's tomb on Mount Vaea is a translation of Ruth i. 16–17.)

AGAIN from out the Southern Seas
We hear their bawling batteries;
Again where shift the pleasant airs,
The fouling breath of cannon fares,
And leaves to girdle Upolu
A long, red stain upon the blue.
Roused from their tender reveries,
  The Vailima gardens wring
  With red rose-mallows quivering, —
But yonder, up Vaea's stairs,
  Unfooted by a battle-thought,
The godless noises find surcease,
  And Tusitala, undistraught,
Remains in peace, remains in peace.

Down Summer seas they blare and blot
And hurtle wide their Christian shot
Among the villaged cocoa-palms,
A sudden wealth of leaden alms —
Reason, forsooth, a native king
Waxed weary of their bullying.

But there in his lone mountain spot,
He who loved well the island race
In silence turns away his face,
Albe his voice from those far calms
Unto the Northern conscience cries:
"Indeed no kith of mine be these
Who hold sweet life so light a prize —
Leave us in peace, leave us in peace!"

ALBA LONGA

I HAVE read in tales of the heroes
That lived in the days of eld,
Of that city built in Latium
By the Alban Mount upheld,
Along the white crest winding,
Buttressed and citadelled.

I have heard how her long walls guarded
The Tiber's vale afar,
How they gleamed through years of quiet,
And glowed in the years of war;
I have dreamt how the pale moon lit them
To the exiled Numitor.

I can close my eyes and behold it,
That city so long and white,
With her columned temple rising
Under the star-ceiled night,
And the vestal Rhea flitting
Within by the pallid light.

And oh, for some chord of music,
And oh, for the voice divine,
To echo softly and sweetly
Across this dream of mine,
While Rhea's white robes flutter
By Vesta's spotless shrine!

Some nights when the plangent murmurs
  Of rivers of wind go by,
I am one with their undulations,
  Their eddy and sweep and sigh:
We mingle and flow together
  Under the storm-filled sky.

And then we are chilled with sorrow,
  As we flow and flow and flow
Back through the channels of ages
  To the sources of ancient woe,
Back in the Tiber valley
  Those long white hills below.

A light in the temple of Vesta
  Around the shrine was shed;
And oh, but it leaped and flickered
  To one great orb o'erhead:
The flame of Rhea was golden,
  But the flame of Mars was red.

A sigh, a sigh in the nightwind
  For the awful shields that gleam
Of a Vestal's sons turned warriors
  Beside the Tiber stream:—
So my purple Rome has swallowed
  The Long White City of dream!

FOR A FLYLEAF

(RUSKIN'S "ROADSIDE SONGS OF TUSCANY")

Since the hearth-smoke of the world
First into the azure curled,
Men have hummed them by the fire,
Women crooned their sweet desire
In low, minor melodies, —
Just such little songs as these.

Simple words but towering love,
Each-day feelings speaking of;
And the heart that beats within
Breast where suffering has been
Will know its own and quickly seize
Just such little songs as these.

When the improvising wind
Flutes across the cottage blind
With a music new, but old,
It will always pause to hold
Some sweet note — at mother-knees
Children singing songs like these.

Such a song claims little wit,
For anyone can fathom it;
But 't will cling to lips that sing,
Like a kiss of some far Spring,
Gotten when your fancy-breeze
Sang to you such songs as these.

Out of hearts that feel the pain,
Knowing it will heal again;
Out of souls that do not care
What the form be if so there
Linger something that will ease —
Come such simple songs as these.

MOTHERS AND SISTERS

Mothers and sisters whom no sacrifice
  Dismays, nor whom your long, laborious hours
  Do anywise appall, ye are the powers
By whom the swift are girded for the prize
They reach in the light of your believing eyes.
  Ye are the hidden oil the shrine devours;
  Soil of the garden whence the great rose flowers;
The silent force that bids a star arise.
Ye ask of men nor honor, nor regret,
  Nor memory, save one's whose love is all.
Renouncement? Living daily the divine!
  Effacement? Still the world your names shall call
Monica was the mother of Augustine;
Pascal had Jacqueline; Renan, Henriette!

AFTER AN AMATEUR PERFORMANCE OF *LES ROMANESQUES*

It was all just a play —
They will both tell you so!
We believe what they say:
"It was all just a play."
Still, "Sylvette" — "Percinet" —
Wherever they go.
Was it all just a play?
They will both tell you so!

TO SYLVETTE

(AN ACROSTIC RONDEAU)

(The first amateur representation in America of Rostand's "Les Romanesques" occurred in February, 1901, at the Lyceum Theatre in Minneapolis. It was given by the Dramatic Club of the University of Minnesota, Miss Inez Helen Lord playing Sylvette, and Mr. Thomas Swem, Percinet.)

Is it, Sylvette, young Percinet's
Naïveté, impulsive ways,
  Engaging chivalry, or yet
  Zeal for the old Romance, hath set
Heart sweet as thine in Love's amaze?

Enchantments out of other days
Love weaves: and the design he lays
  Easy to learn is. To forget,
    Is it, Sylvette?

Nay! And the Cynic's questioning phrase
Let us, in silence only, raise —
  Of to the Wall how large a debt
  Romantic Love herein hath met.
Dissect Love not: it never pays,
    Does it, Sylvette?

IN THE BODLEIAN

And am I heir to all this lore
Of the great men gone before —
To the infinite, fair renown
That the generous years hand down?
Youngest son, yet held to be
Worthy such a legacy?

Nay, scarce worthy. Yet few fears
Chide the charitable years
By whose terms their whole estate
Doth widen as we dissipate:
I inherit but so far
As my powers of spending are.

All is freely left me, yet
Must I toil for all I get,
Living happier for this
Condition of the benefice:
Rich but thrifty, as I were
A millionaire day-laborer.

"EX LIBRIS"

In an old book at even as I read
Fast fading words adown my shadowy page,
I crossed a tale of how, in other age
At Arqua, with his books around him, sped
The word to Petrarch; and with noble head
Bowed gently o'er his volume, that sweet sage
To Silence paid his willing seigniorage.
And they who found him whispered, "He is dead!"
Thus timely from old comradeships would I
To Silence also rise. Let there be night,
Stillness and only these staid watchers by,
And no light shine save my low study light —
Lest of his kind intent some human cry
Interpret not the Messenger aright.

III

ROSELEAVES

MAY NIGHT

Again my slender thorn is white
And as of old its odor blows
Up through the lit and lovely night
To me within my garden close.

In unforgotten, holy Mays,
All on a night that else was still,
Thou sangest up the country ways
And borest me bloom from yonder hill.

Now, as in other Springs, I wait
For thy familiar voice — in vain;
The moon and I have listened late
For that remembered music-strain.

Of song and thee I dream — and round
My rest the night-bird's note is borne;
And here, a slim girl blossom-crowned,
Arms wide to me, the bridal thorn!

THOU DIDST NOT DIE

Thou didst not die when thou didst leave my vision,
Nor art thou distant now thy face is gone;
Thou hast not fled to some dim, trans-Elysian,
Uncalled-from shore, where'er thy form be flown.

Thou whom the days continually gave pleasure,
Whom the warm nights in happiness shut round,
Thou seekest not for any blossoms fresher
In strange, bright fields, than in our own were found.

Thou hadst not looked to other constellations,
Being unwearied with thine own and mine;
Thou hast not sought new, heavenly occasions;
Here and by me the Universe is thine.

Thou art so near these nights no more seem sober,
Nor thy loved flowers sad around me here,
Than when we watched together in October
The eye of Taurus flaming low and clear;

Then when we made the woodland echo startle
With long halloos in the sweet Autumn air;
Or laughed to see the vistaed brooklet dartle,
Or strung a harp with strings of maidenhair.

Nay, thou art by me in a subtler presence,
That makes my world less earth and more a star;
For in my soul thou hast poured acquiescence
From interstellar wells of rest afar.

And I grow wise in the wide ways of heaven
With thee beside me to explain all things —
With thee, once mine, still mine! to whom 't is given
To sweep the stars, yet folding here thy wings.

Thou on long eves, interpreted of roses,
Dost teach me utter lore; and perfume-shod
Each meaning comes, and calmly fair uncloses
As sweet girls' spirits at the feet of God.

THE WHITE ROSE

By a pleasant garden walk once there grew a slender stalk
Where at eve a pair of sweethearts used to love to dream and talk;
It was they who in the Maytime, in the flush of Maytime fair,
Brought the rose and set it there.

And the Lover said, "'T will be as a pledge 'twixt thee and me,
For the first sweet bloom upon it shall be consecrate to thee —
Shall be thine to keep forever, and upon its petals white
Shall our solemn troth be plight!"

And the bud that heard him speak, from that slender stalk and weak
Nourishment took heed to gather, favoring foods began to seek.
When each night the lovers marked it, how its little leaves did swell,
They would say, "The Rose doth well!"

Bright and busy days were those for the eager, swelling Rose,
Fairest petals ever whitened in a lover's garden close!
Thought the bud, "Ah, soon the hour, soon the drooping on her breast,
Next her heart to be at rest!"

One still hour of reddening sun when the dew-time was begun
Came the Lover to the blossom — came the Lover. only one.
And strange dews fell silently as he took the Rose full-blown,
Took, and bore it off alone.

In a still and sacred gloom, in a hushed and dim-lit room,
Did he leave his plighted flower with its consecrated bloom,
Hers to keep forever shielded from the shattering of the blast.
And the White Rose sighed, "At last!"

OLD GARDENS

The white rose tree that spent its musk
For lovers' sweeter praise,
The stately walks we sought at dusk,
Have missed thee many days.

Again, with once-familiar feet,
I tread the old parterre —
But, ah, its bloom is now less sweet
Than when thy face was there.

I hear the birds of evening call;
I take the wild perfume;
I pluck a rose — to let it fall
And perish in the gloom.

IN A DREAM

Last night I dreamed God let you come again
To the old place we loved so long ago;
And all my burning lips could utter then
Was, "Love, I did not know! I did not know!"

I dreamed you were as sweetly fragile-fair
As in the days when you began to fade —
As in those days when walking with you there
I wondered that you often were afraid.

There was the same appeal of widened eyes,
The flutter of the hand within my arm; —
And now I was not strange to this surprise,
But sought to clasp you from the shadowed harm.

And in your eyes reproach, filmed o'er by love,
And softened by the tender, absent years,
Renewed the heartbreak I am subject of,
And flooded all the sources of old tears.

It seemed not you that spoke, yet 't was your voice;
Still-lipped, you seemed to make unwilling moan,
As if the outer powers had left no choice
But you must answer, "Ay, but should have known!"

SONG AFTER PARTING

It is over. Like sweet dreams
Let it be,
Or a summer-haunted stream's
Melody.
Even so thy passing seems
Unto me.

But the dream most dear and bright
May live yet,
Fading not along the night
In regret —
While the heart love faileth quite
Must forget!

And the river sings and flows
Ever on,
Born, like love, of mountain snows
And the sun —
While thy love, unlike it, goes
And is gone!

SINCE WE SAID GOOD-BYE

Kissed we not and said good-bye?
  Then why wilt thou haunt me thus
With thine eyes in all my dreams
  Making night-time luminous?
Art thou haunted, dear, as I,
Since we kissed and said good-bye?

Had we kissed not, parting so,
  This were only just in thee;
Had we kissed and said no word
  Thou hadst right to torture me;
But thou knowest, well as I,
First we kissed, then said good-bye!

That good-byes may last too long —
  Is it this thine eyes would tell?
Or do they reproaching plead
  Kisses do not last so well?
Art thou lonelier than I
Since we kissed and said good-bye?

THE TWO PRAYERS

At night one leaned from earth's dim edge,
(Oh, but he seemed alone!)
And looked down, down, below his ledge
Where a calm planet shone.

Some pain — a common thing — had bent
His looks out over heaven;
The sorrow of a day ill-spent,
The still remorse of even,

In which (oh, quite in vain!) he yearned
Unto the lustrous star
That with more steadfast beauties burned
Than in the earthlights are.

He flashed a prayer from his far height,
And down the dark blue well
Where lone and splendid swam that light,
He watched it as it fell.

Out far he strained to mark its course —
And sudden was aware
That upward from such golden source
A prayer had crossed his prayer!

His on serenely to its goal
  Had fluttered like a flame;
Yet gazed he still with wondering soul:
  The two prayers were the same.

CONSUMMATION

As the clear fountain sparkles on the hill
  In some flowered basin at a cool, sweet height,
  Yet comes from we guess not what galleried night,
Devious, untraced, and altogether ill, —
So doth my love from other days distil,
  Through channels occult groping up to light,
  Deeming all labors past as thrice requite
If once thou stoop thy hollowed hand to fill.
Clear eyes that bend upon my love thou hast;
  I would have them thereon meet no dismay: —
I thank the chastenings of that cryptic past
  Where those soiled waters crept their stains away, —
Those slandered days whose riddle now, at last,
  Grows plain before this fair and ultimate day.

AFTER ALL

When, after all, you come to Love and lay
Your weary hands within his hands and say,
"Love, thou art best!" how can you know that
then
He will not laugh and turn his face away?

When, after many conflicts, your proud heart,
Seamed with old scars, would take Love's quiet
part —
Ah, to make fair that place for him again
Which of all Love's physicians has the art?

THE AMBER LOOP

(Amber was believed by the ancients to be the crystallized tears of wood nymphs.)

He found it in a quaint bazaar,
This amber for her auburn hair,
And pictured to himself afar
Its beauty coiling there.

He saw its shining length uptwist
Through visions of her lovelit face,
And let it nestle round his wrist
In delicate embrace.

An exquisite proportioning,
From end to end of every strand,
He noticed as the yellow thing
Slipt idly through his hand.

"Five men no fewer toilsome years
It took to sort the stringful, sir!"
He bore it off to leave in tears
The doting jeweller.

As with the gems he, smiling, went
Down that strange city's winding street,
The odor of the Orient
Rose from them, pungent-sweet —

A scent so dear to some lost day,
So consecrated to the past,
That ere he knew it tears broke way
And hotly held him fast.

And were these not wrought out in tears,
By hands that trembled in their place
Through long and maybe loveless years
To consummate this grace?

And will she, too, recall it so,
When, after many days, they greet —
Their half-forgotten, common woe,
Heart-filling, pungent-sweet?

HUGO: RODIN'S BUST, CHAPLAIN'S MEDAL

(For C. M. A., in Paris, who sent me the Centenary Medal, 1902)

Both Hugo: that, mid-struggle, titanic in triumph-strain;
This, poised, secure, like a god who looks down on the toils of the plain!

WHEN ROSELEAVES FALL

When roseleaves fall in evenings cold
To mingle with their mother mold,
  Look to it lest thy heart be set
  To seek strange blossoms and forget
Thy roses and their ways of old!

Run not to lesser blooms! nor fold
Unto thy heart the creed those hold
  Who stand like Stoics by and let
    Their roseleaves fall!

But gather them as precious gold;
Rich-spiced, high-placed and orient-bowled,
  They shall be Summer to thee yet.
  What though they fade and thou regret,
Thou canst make theirs a boon untold
    When roseleaves fall.

IV

BEYOND THE HILLS

CROSS COURSES

Where Summer skies glint silver-blue
The dark, cliff-clinging larches through,
Where foam and spray and sounding swell
Commingle from the inland seas
In solemn, heart-reëchoed keys
Up piney crest and cedar dell,

Five souls whose love went out to thee,
Dim Spirit of lost Arcady,
Whose hopes breathed in the balm of prayer
From benedictions of the air —
Five souls crossed courses from far seas
And thrilled to sudden sympathies.

They parted. The continuous sea
Made of it but a memory.
One feels the pulse of freedom throb
In surges on the Pilgrim shore;
One hears the Mississippi sob
The sorrows of forgotten lore;

One touches Ocean's healing hems
Below the busy tide of Thames;

One, by the amber Baltic, lights
A Northland home with love's pure gleam;
And one, ah, one, upon the Heights
Is safe across the shadowed stream.

Five friends, a dash of jewelled spray,
A twilight shadow drifted down
Across the ledge's larchen crown;
Farewells, and through the hidden way
Love pilots toward an unseen beach
Each to the haven best for each.

ALOHA OE!

(TO W. S. W.)

Behold, we clasp our sundered hands
  Across the kind and faithful deep,
You on the gold Hawaiian sands,
  I here among the cows and sheep.

I thanked the waters that so well
  Had borne you to the Island friend,
And thank them thrice for every swell
  That bears me back the words you send.

Strange currents, the untamable air
  Between us moving, and the rhyme
Of epic oceans, wax and wear;
  And lightly slip the feet of Time.

And you will tread the Island Hills,
  And you will learn the Island grace,
Before your gift of daffodils
  Shrivels in my Benares vase.

Only come back and I 'll be strong
  With wine of hope and country cheer;
Still begging for another song
  And laughing just to see you near!

Woodend Farm

A MEMORY

In the hush of holy twilight
A trembling sea of red;
A purple cloud dipped lakeward
Where the dead sun's pall is spread,
And a gray-tiled walk for shadows
Leading to years long dead.

I lean on the archéd palings
Of a bridge in a city grand:
There are turrets of chastest silver
Arising on every hand,
And such domes of fire-tipped crystal
As would dazzle in fairyland.

Dark gondolas go sweeping
On burning ponds below,
With songs of old Venezia
In tender notes and low;
Round them in ceaseless rhythm
The red waves come and go.

Now they drift in the torchlight,
And under a canopy

Fair eyes look out in wonder
  At the glory they may see,
And a fairy hand is tapping
  To the gondoliere's glee.

Now they drift into the shadow,
  And the cantilena's notes
Rise and fall in measure
  With the dipping of the boats,
Till vague in the melting distance
  Their pensive cadence floats.

It is wafted into the chambers
  Of my dearest memory,
There to bide and make me music
  When the world weighs heavily,
And to echo its simple sweetness
  To all eternity.

THE DEAD GEYSER

I SAT in the forest at sundown,
On the trunk of a fallen tree;
There were calm, low lights to westward,
But shadows over me,
And the gold beneath the branches
Was wonderful to see.

Before me lay a circle
In the glow of the fading sky,
The rim of an outworn geyser
That brothered an age gone by,
With roots grown down in its fissures
As thick as a good man's thigh.

A hemlock, rough and distorted,
Stood at the circle's head,
And beneath it were ivy and yarrow
And little gold daisies spread,
Like such as they loop in the Springtime
To cover the noble dead.

I mused on the buried giant
That, hundred of years before,
Up through the mossgrown crater
From his narrow dungeon tore —
And half in a dream I listened
To catch his approaching roar.

Then up in the evening silence,
And up in the westward light,
And over the widening shadow,
He seemed to take his flight,
Alone in the awesome stillness,
So solemn and weird and white.

A chipmunk peeped from his burrow
Where the white dead pine-stem lay;
A night-hawk rose from his tree-tip
To spiral the muffling gray;
And the wandering breath of Summer
Seemed all at once taken away.

With never a plash nor a murmur
The beautiful spectre stood,
Gold-vested, scarlet-mitred
Of fires behind the wood,
And his white hand pointing heavenward
In earth's dim solitude.

A catbird called through the gloaming
And shook the woodland deep;
The folded gentian quivered
In the quiet of her sleep,
And my heart that had been so tranquil
Came up with a sudden leap.

The molten brass in the tree-boles
Had dwindled to a span;
So I rose with great thoughts crowding
In solemn caravan,
And crept through the shade, a shadow,
Who had set me down a man.

A SUNDOWN IN THE YELLOWSTONE

Clear-cut against a windswept sky, beneath the fading day,
The long, low ridges calmly lie, a cameo in gray:
'T is night at home, and here am I a thousand miles away.

I watch through gray-green hyaline the geyser-vapors' flight —
Stray underworldlings made divine by contact with the light,
Like souls fresh-freed from earth's confine and bound for realms more bright.

The sun, from out his gilded car, looks back along the West;
His red steeds brush the evening star athwart the mountain crest,
And bring me messages afar from one I love the best.

A hundred cloudlets swim beside, translucent silver through,
And others mauve and crimson stride adown the pallid blue;
And freighted well I know they ride with tender thoughts from you.

But all the light that e'er has lain before the sunset
throne,
And all the wings of vermeil stain through golden
portals flown,
Would leave me with the after-pain of wondering
alone,

If, when, beyond the lowest hill the red has all turned
gray,
And my lone heart has ceased to fill with wealth of
dying day,
I paused to think that you are still a thousand miles
away.

IN A WYOMING FOREST

Now it is twilight, and a yellow fire
  Streaks through the narrow aisles of singing pines.
  Low the old sexton, Night, lets down his blinds,
Leaving me in his sanctuary choir
To hear my own heart inwardly aspire,
  Chanting with all the trees the same sweet lines;
  While, overhead, one bent cloud dimly shines
Like an archangel pleading my desire.
Sunset across the level woodland floor,
  And calm within the forest of my soul;
A softer light I had not known before
  Now radiates from my beclouded goal,
And in a tranquil glory through the door
  Of the dun future seems to rise and roll.

MACKINAW

Can I forget the perfect day
When, drifted from the world away,
I lifted up my eyes and saw
The shining cliffs of Mackinaw?
Can I forget the limpid lake,
That mock-a-day that to and fro
A busy mirror ran below,
And streamed white wonders in our wake?

Forget the long, delicious drive
Where freshly I could feel the live
Young spirit of old woods survive?
Forget the hillsides junipered,
The gloomy hemlock zephyr-stirred,
That in the winking waters draw
Their aquarelles at Mackinaw?
Her tapered pinnacles and domes,
Her straits beyond the larch-browed walls
Afar in glistening intervals,
Below the heights of old Fort Holmes?

Ah, no. I cannot reason that
Where beauty once in vision sat
All life's defacing after-storms
Can level its imprinted forms.

Each cliff, each curve, each mirrored tree,
On tablets of my memory
Shall evermore recorded be —
Intaglio of that perfect day
When, drifted from the world away,
I lifted up my eyes and saw
The lovely isle of Mackinaw.

THE SONGS THE ENGINES SANG

For days the lordly engines trod
To foam the subject sea,
And gloried in their power to plod
Long paths untiringly.

They bore us down the swirling deep,
Watchful from light to light;
Their rhythm, throbbing through our sleep,
Soothed us in dream all night.

And when we rose, the world made new,
To breathe the morning air,
Their music on the dancing blue
Made all the day more fair.

In them a Pilgrims' Chorus woke,
A chant serene and strong,
Which from our voices did evoke
Sweet intervals of song.

And, as our comradeships grew warm,
And loud our carols rang,
It seemed our lips began to form
The songs the engines sang.

Words flew to aid the blending tones
And make them fit to be
The rich, respondent antiphones,
To heavier harmony.

As when, from some cathedral niche,
One hears the organ roll,
And let its diapason pitch
The anthems of his soul,

So we, at noon or twilight dim,
Heard that great voice below,
And on our lips we found a hymn
Whether we would or no, —

A hymn of comfort and of health
That into being burst
From the still soul's unmeasured wealth,
Unconscious, unrehearsed.

And now, amid the city throng,
Where smoky vapors hang,
Our memory keeps us fresh and strong
With songs the engines sang.

DAWN IN CUMBERLAND

Our eager train to northward sped
Through shadow till the East was red,
When, lo, the dawn's reviving brand
Kindled the hills of Cumberland.

Our track, along an upland crest,
Shone first; but down the quiet West
Each faint-lined hollow still was full
Of the slow mist's unwinding wool.

Penrith lay wrapped in fairy smoke
Till winds among the valleys woke
And stirred within it, as it seems
Reluctant risers move in dreams.

Beyond all this was that I saw
The lofty brow of stern Skiddaw?
I know not for my heart did hold
An image of a gentler mold:

Wordsworth, whose name these hillsides own,
And waters' tender undertone
Makes music of forevermore
In Derwent, Duddon or Lodore.

From those fresh heights rich store have I
Of upland lovely thoughts laid by:
From the soft mist below them hung
New dreams that yet I walk among.

THE AVON AND THE THAMES

If, in all Albion's storied sweep,
No other wave were seen,
The Avon and the Thames would keep
Her romance gardens green.

Two silver cords are those she wears,
Fast by her side to hold
Her book of songs, her book of prayers,
As did the dames of old.

Fine lyric lore the first book reads,
Of woodland wanderings;
The other, ancient, holy deeds
And orisons of kings.

Mitres and crowns continually
Allure the chanting Thames;—
The Avon lilts to any lea
For cowslip diadems.

The Thames, at Oxford turned the sage,
The prince at Windsor grown,
Betakes himself in pilgrimage
To Lambeth's reverend throne.

But Avon, gentle Avon, goes
  Far from such loud renown,
Beneath old Warwick's porticos
  To quiet Stratford town.

And there — sweet home of high romance! —
  It loiters, giving praise
For him whose consecrating glance
  Sought once its leafy ways.

Gold reveries, silken dreams, beside
  Its marge their glamour blend,
Till, slipping to the Severn's tide,
  It smiles an envied end.

While Thames and Avon onward sing,
  Their music's spell shall fall,
The one's on warrior, priest and king,
  The other's upon all.

AT WILMCOTE

(Shakespeare's mother, Mary Arden, was a girl at Wilmcote, a picturesque hamlet in Warwickshire.)

So soft the dusk that Summer night
  The still moon like a stranger came,
And ere we missed the sunset light,
  Made us aware of whiter flame.
Fair rose she o'er the steading wall,
  Poised there as though she loved to hang
And let her fairy splendors fall
  Where Mary Arden walked and sang.

The shadows in the hollyhocks
  That trailed their crimson bloom along
The paling of her garden walks,
  Were shaken with a sudden song:
Some bird, a stranger to this sphere,
  Smitten mid-wing with beauty's pang,
Sought easement of his rapture here
  Where Mary Arden walked and sang.

This moon, the same that followed her
  Among the shining orchard trees
Where still her garments seem to stir
  The ghosts of ancient fragrances!

That bird, the same that died of bliss
Long since, but for a sweet hour sprang
To life and song a night like this
Where Mary Arden lived and sang!

We may not know what sort of song
Lured here the prescient nightingale,
Or whether it was fair and strong,
Or fitted to a homely tale;
We only guess that some far voice
From future ages to her rang,
And bade her woman's heart rejoice
While Mary Arden walked and sang.

IN HOLYROOD

In Holyrood, up yellow stair
I sought the turret chamber where
  On Summer evenings long ago
  The mandolin of Rizzio
Made Mary music, rich and rare.

And, pausing in the shadows there,
Methought some echo of his air
  Along the halls came ringing low
    In Holyrood.

Ah, 't was a sighing wind that bare
The burthen of old heart-despair,
  And trembled at the casement so
  Like dying hope or love in woe,
Remembering days when life was fair
    In Holyrood!

OCTAVES IN AN OXFORD GARDEN

TO MRS. EDMUND D. BROOKS

(On the Fly-Leaf of a Copy of the First Edition of the "Octaves in an Oxford Garden.")

"Blest spirit, who with loving tenderness,"
Thus courteously saluted Angelo
Gracious Vittoria: and my octave so
One tender woman's loving soul would bless. —
Soul, which in asking naught, doth all possess,
Which, giving freely, all good gifts shall know,
My rime, that unto you this book doth owe,
Returns to you with gratitude's caress.

December 25, 1903.

OCTAVES IN AN OXFORD GARDEN

I

The day is like a Sabbath in a swoon. *Wadham*
Slow in September's blue go fair cloud-things
Poising aslant upon their charméd wings,
Stilled to the last faint backward smiles of June.
Softly I tread, and with repentant shoon,
Half fearfully in sweet imaginings,
Where broods, like courtyards of departed kings,
The old Quadrangle paved with afternoon.

II

No footfall sounds within the empty hall;
No echoes people corridor and stair;
The sunlight slumbers on the silent square,
Forgetful of slow shadows by the wall.
Yon is the passage where low lights do fall
And linger longest (I have watched them there),
Beyond which you will find a spot most fair,
A comfortable and a holy spot withal.

III

There dwells the very soul of quietness,
  Seclusion's spirit deep within the green,
  Secure from fame as some unsung demesne
In far Ionian hills. There waits to bless,
With her all-healing, mother-soft caress,
  The Sympathy of Trees, that friend unseen,
  Soother of moods, on whom all hearts do lean
Sooner or later, and their cares confess.

IV

As one whose road winds upward turns his face
  Unto the valleys where he late hath stood,
  Leaning upon his staff in peace to brood
On many a beauty of the distant place,
So I in this cool garden pause a space,
  Reviewing many things in many a mood,
  Accumulating friends in solitude
From the assembly of my thoughts and days.

V

As here among the well-remembering boughs
  Where every leaf is tongue to ancient breath,
  Speech of the yester years forgathereth,
And all the winds are long-fulfilléd vows —

So from of old those ringing names arouse
A whispering in the foliate shades of death,
Where History her golden rosary saith,
Glowing, the light of Memory on her brows.

VI

What hath she uttered that should make me dread —
That brown-robed Abbess with her beads soft-told,
Who hath her seat upon the fragrant mold
And sees the gliding Centuries perfected?
Naught. Only good things saying, she, with head
Bowed to her task submissively, doth fold
An era by for every bead of gold,
And smileth on the glory of the Dead.

VII

Here did Wren make himself a student home
Or e'er he made a name that England loves.
I wonder, as he watched yon chapel doves,
If he did have some foresight of that dome
On Lud's old Hill where now their coveys come,
With them that bear his name, in lofty coves.
I wonder if this straying shadow moves
Adown the wall as then he saw it roam.

VIII

Blake hither brought his book — to con the sky,
Commanding squadrons of the upper seas
That streamed, impatient of Time's slow degrees,
Their pennoned fleets of phantasy on high.
O wind-shod Time, that we should bid thee fly!
Five hundred years good Bishop Wykeham's trees
Down there at New have known such lads as these,
And they are patient still and standing by.

IX

Nature's Calmness

All things seem ordered sweetly in the calm,
Full measure of the even-marching years.
This elm I love hath never fought with fears
And sickening heartbreak; but the steady psalm
Of one who trusts not vainly issues from
His quiet depth — such psalm as lifts and cheers
Each tiny stalk or tender blade that rears
A nostril to the breeze-bestowéd balm.

X

Primrose, and Phlox, and Clytie (as I call
The lady Sunflower, never to forget
The faithful nymph she was — ah, yes, is yet!),
These sway unto its heartsome rise-and-fall

With ivies undulating up the wall;
And thought, to inarticulate rhythm set,
Joins harmony, while far the World's vain fret
And discord dreamwise vanish from it all.

XI

Soon will sweet Primrose be a faded crone,
Yet seeks she now nor flattery nor fame;
And Phlox upon the morrow lays no claim
When her shed bloom shall be around her blown.
This Beech, 'neath whom their many kindred shone
As fair, hath ne'er heard any wish a name,
And even he hath reckoned it no shame
To live in silence and to pass unknown.

XII

Lost Inheritance

This is my lost inheritance. I look
With brotherliest affections yearning forth
To the flower-bearing sod. Oh, what is worth
The strange estate of flesh I strangely took?
In the soft soil the garden breezes shook
From the wall chink but now, there's measure of earth
To match my body's dust when its re-birth
To sod restores old functions I forsook.

XIII

Vicissitude

Strange that a sod for just a thrill or two
Should ever be seduced into the round
Of change wherein its present state is found
In this my form! forsake its quiet, true
And fruitfullest retirement to go through
The heat, the strain, the languor, and the wound!
Forget soft rain to hear the stormier sound,
Exchange for burning tears its peaceful dew!

XIV

Old Song and a River

It was the lip of murmuring Thames along
When new lights sought the wood all strangely fair,
Such quiet lights as saints transfigured wear
In minster windows crept the glades among.
And far as from some hazy hill, yet strong,
Methought an upland shepherd piped it there,
Rousing a silvern echo in her lair:
"*Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song.*"

XV

My Spenser lay the dewy grass upon,
His pages shone before me as I read —
Like the gold daisies gleaming round his bed
His lantern verses upward to me shone.

End never yet his song's rich note hath known;
"Sweet Thames" ran softly by his burthen sped,
And shall, while hymns are sung and prayers are said,
Low chanting his glad Prothalamion.

XVI

The Same Sky

I never thought until one night i' the dark
When one I love was on the labouring seas,
How constantly the stars' white companies
Stand watch o'er all — yea, when horizons stark
Are swept of every other sign and mark
So it were utmost desert but for these.
(And then, I think, my spirit found its knees
And asked them to guide well my dear one's barque.)

XVII

Constancy

It is the same sky over sea and land:
The same pure stars attend great London town
That tremble where the Channel thunders down;
'T is we that vary, running on the strand.
Life bounds no fresher from the eternal hand
Here in the Wadham branches than out yon,
Where blurs the dusty highway wide and wan:
Good is within all, having all things planned.

XVIII

Ford Maddox Brown's "Christ washing the Feet of Peter"

There is a picture — you have seen it oft:
The Master at unwilling Peter's feet
Ennobling evermore and making sweet
Each humble service wrought with mind aloft.
Such mystic splendour shines serene and soft
('T was dreamt out through long years and made complete
From visions ripe) that, turning thence, we greet
A new world, where dull conscious self is dofft.

XIX

The Absence

He who this limned is gone. They treasure still
The wooden wafer once he loved to hold
Which (can we question?) now his hand is mold
Yearns ever for his touch of tender skill.
This ochre, longs it not to meet his will
About the head of Jesus aureoled?
And that sad patch of umber some slight fold
Of Peter's garment would so gladly fill!

XX

Even so our fancies' colours, keen of yore,
When one we love lays by this earth-constraint,
Upon our palettes do wax dull and faint,
Fulfilling not commissions first they bore.

For he is gone, and never holy lore
  Nor shining nimbus of transfigured saint
  May anywhere the fragment ochre paint;
And the rich umber waits for evermore.

XXI

One time from that gray close I did *St. Paul's*
  emerge
  Wherethrough I had been toiling, and to me,
  Like some benignant rock above the sea,
St. Paul's great brow above the mist and surge
Loomed kindly, and methought did kindly urge
  All men up to it, till there came to be
  A hush on hearts, a deep tranquillity
Of healing virtue, round the minster's verge.

XXII

Thus Friendship. As a sacred citadel
  Above the hurrying crowd of men it towers;
  There in or sun or frost, or shine or showers,
Invites to worship with no beating bell.
This world's a city, and it loves full well
  The mid-street sanctuary that is ours
  Whither to steal away renewing powers
Whose sources only at that Altar dwell.

XXIII

Dust of Eden

Some dust of Eden eddies round us yet.
Some clay o' the Garden, clinging in
the breast,
Down near the heart yet bides unmanifest.
Last eve in gardens strange to me I let
The path lead far; and, lo, my vision met
Old, forfeit hopes. I, as on homeward quest,
By recognizing trees was bidden rest,
And pitying leaves looked down and sighed, "Forget."

XXIV

Restoration

To one tired heart I said: If it be true
That, in the sad much-winding of your ways,
Your thread is broken out of other days,
And you know not what joy is lost to you,
I pray you, turn aside awhile and through
This quiet garden think on some old place
Dear to the child you were, and that loved face
That once in many a labyrinth was your clew.

XXV

Roman Glass-ware preserved in the Ashmolean

Fair crystal cups are dug from earth's
old crust,
Shattered but lovely; for, at price of all
Their shameful exile from the banquet-hall,
They have been bargaining beauties from the dust.

So, dig my life but deep enough, you must
  Find broken friendships round its inner wall —
  Which once my careless hand let slip and
    fall —
Brave with faint memories, rich in rainbow-rust.

XXVI

Life's Usurpation

Tell them, sweet evening breeze poised
  here, no less
  I love their memory whom thou goest to greet
  Out there at heaven's gate, but that I meet
Less oft the idle thoughts of old distress.
Tell them the thought of them still lives to bless,
  But since I learned how much, despite defeat,
  My life demands that I shall make complete,
I must yield up my cherished loneliness.

XXVII

Traces

Something of sorrow am I not denied, —
  Share of the earth 's old, universal pain
  I own, — though but as hillsides own the rain,
Or solid sands the long wave's stroking side.
Still, though no rains upon the steep may bide,
  And harmlessly the sea-floods rise and wane,
  The downward torrent-traces do remain,
And sands bear record of the sedulous tide.

XXVIII

Before an inn hearth's tale-begetting flame,
  Or sooth, or fable, yielded of the store
  A white old man from perilous country bore,
I heard of a strange tree without a name
Whose shade the brinks of fuming gulfs did claim
  And the precipitous torrents of that shore.
  Beauteous and straight it was, and uniflore
With purest bud that e'er to blossom came.

XXIX

As those great petals burst asunder there,
  A wondrous fragrance on the breeze was fanned,
  Solace unique of that unfriendly land
Wafted remote along the treasuring air.
But then, the old man said with trembling care,
  A little raising his blue, withered hand,
  " The flower droops straightway ere it doth expand,
And never another bloom that tree may bear."

XXX

Oh, sometimes, in the years since then, I too
  Through dangerous and deserted lands have wended,
  And many a stark and chasmy steep descended
Which crumbling cataracts shed their vapour through.

But where such lone, mysterious blossom grew
I have not sought to learn, by one more splendid
Along the dimmest verges close attended —
The all-enfolding, deathless love of you!

XXXI

Separation

Early at eve on Onchan Head, because
The crimson lustre was upon the bay,
And much bright melody began to sway
Upward from gay pavilions, and there was
None there to speak with in the music's pause,
I sickened of the glory and turned away.
Oh, that red sun had sealed a perfect day
Had I but heard your low, sweet laugh's applause!

XXXII

He is no lover of the sea who loses
Sound of her voices, inland wandering.
Still should her old melodious mystery spring
Around him, wend he wheresoe'er he chooses;
And so within me rhythmic life refuses
By any other pulse than yours to swing,
Far from your friendship's ocean though I sing
Where the hills tire and the rough pathway bruises.

XXXIII

A great nelumbo heavy on the breast
Of heaven's tranquil lake must be the moon
Above this garden in the still night's noon,
Bending the gold of her refulgent crest.
Thus to the surface of these days of rest
Through all my absent idlesse, late and soon,
The thought of you doth blossom and the boon
Of the dear face that waits me down the West.

THE CITY

"For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" . . .

IN A COPY OF "THE CITY AND OTHER POEMS"

(TO MR. AND MRS. EDMUND D. BROOKS)

Who sowed calm islands in the swelling sea,
Hath scattered life with friends for you and me.

NOVEMBER, 1905.

Persons

Uchomo, *surnamed Abgar, King of Edessa in Mesopotamia.*
Cleonis, *an Athenian woman, his Queen.*
Ananias, *a Chamberlain.*
Agamede.
Stilbe.
A Physician.
Belarion.
Body Slave *to Abgar.*
A Messenger.
Slave-Boy.
Women, *companions and attendants of the Queen.*
Soldiers.

The scene throughout is an enclosed garden of planes and pomegranates some distance outside Edessa. The river Daisun, with occasional sails, and a winding military road, are seen at intervals in the rolling fields beyond the garden walls. Against the horizon in the left background arise the walls and towers of a Greco-Parthian city. In the middle background there is a massive gate, closed and barred; its hinge posts are termini carven with Janus heads. In the right foreground the portico of a summer palace in the Doric style projects into the scene through a wealth of oleanders. The centre is occupied by a marble dais surmounted by a long semi-circular Greek settle of stone, and banked with luxuriant flowers. Near this, a sun-dial.

The time is in the sixteenth year of the reign of the Roman Emperor Tiberius, late in the spring.

The action covers a period of one day from dawn to dark.

I. DAWN

A group of the Queen's women attired in flowing white pepli, one bearing a lyre, some sitting, some leaning against pillars of the portico. Soft music. They sing to a slow measure.

Chorus

Of old it went forth to Euchenor, pronounced of his sire —
Reluctant, impelled by the god's unescapable fire —
To choose for his doom or to perish at home of disease
Or be slain of his foes, among men, where Troy surges down to the seas.

Polyides, the soothsayer, spake it, inflamed by the god.
Of his son whom the fates singled out did he bruit it abroad;
And Euchenor went down to the ships with his armour and men
And straightway, grown dim on the gulf, passed the isles he passed never again.

Why weep ye, O women of Corinth? The doom ye
have heard
Is it strange to your ears that ye make it so mournful
a word?
Is he who so fair in your eyes to his manhood
upgrew
Alone in his doom of pale death — are of mortals the
beaten so few?

O weep not, companions and lovers! Turn back to
your joys:
The defeat was not his which he chose, nor the
victory Troy's.
Him a conqueror, beauteous in youth, o'er the flood
his fleet brought,
And the swift spear of Paris that slew completed the
conquest he sought.

Not the falling proclaims the defeat, but the place of
the fall;
And the fate that decrees and the god that impels
through it all
Regard not blind mortals' divisions of slayer and
slain,
But invisible glories dispense wide over the war-
gleaming plain. [*Enter* AGAMEDE *in the portico.*

AGAMEDE

Go, gentle sisters, and sweet rest be yours.
Ere noon comes hither Abgar's embassy
From the great Healer in Jerusalem.
Get what repose ye may, for Ananias
Hath sent his courier to our waiting Queen
Begging some converse here with her, and we
Doubtless shall then be needed.

STILBE (*stepping from amongst the women*)

Abgar sleeps?

AGAMEDE

Like a tired boy. Cleonis also rests,
And the old doctor in his ante-room.
The Queen commands me thank her faithful ones
Who all night long this slumber have implored
For Abgar's couch with lulling of their song.

STILBE

Is this the morning? I began to think
That, like Persephone, we, too, perchance
Might have transgressed in this half-yearlong night,
Green pomegranates being irresistible
And the only cheer the dark earth offered us.
Pluto provided ripe ones for his guest.

AGAMEDE

Yonder the city 's waking. Eunoë,
Straight to thy bed. Dear child, thy blossom head
Hangs heavy as the dewiest poppy! Thou,
Erigone, whose lyre hath brought the morn,
And little Nyseis of the silver voice,
Speed now while slumber broods above these halls
And even Abgar sleeps.
Thee, Stilbe, yet
Would I detain a space. Some things there are
Befitting us alone as nearest her
And tenderest in her love to weigh together
Of our Cleonis. [*Exeunt Women, except* STILBE.

STILBE (*coldly*)

You, being cousin to her,
Have preference in her intimacy. Much,
Therefore, I 'm honoured by your interview.
Pray, madam, first, whose song was that we sang
The last ere you dismissed us?

AGAMEDE

Abgar's song;
Thou knowest he made it in the garden here.

STILBE

I had forgotten Cleonis sings but love.

AGAMEDE

Yea, and a love the dream of which men die for!

STILBE

And the life of which, I see, they sicken of.
The fighter for me, and songs of sounding war!

[*A pause.*

AGAMEDE

Glaucon, my husband, died to save his king;
Yonder, amid the blossoms, lies entombed
Our little child, our little Charmides.
O gods! take not away my joy in her,
This fair-faced creature I had learnt to love!
Stilbe, thou hast seemed like a fresher self
To me a widow and bereft of youth
In whom so many hopes have been consumed.
My little sister left in Argolis
Must now be tall as thou, a woman grown.

[*Confronting her.*

Tell me, loved Stilbe, what hath stung thy heart
That, since our summons, thy sweet lips so oft
Speak bitterly?

STILBE

Stale sweetness oft turns bitter.

AGAMEDE

Thou art so fair! Yet many a wingéd thrust
At our sad, gentle Queen I hear of thee.
Oh, hadst thou earlier from Edessa come
To stand beside her through this lingering grief,
Thou, too, wouldst curb the quick scorn of the world!

STILBE

Thrice o'er these marbled pools the moon hath filled
Since Uchomo she lured to dwell off here,
While Ananais trudges to Judæa
For Galilean charms. The very pause
She claps upon our city gaiety,
Cries out against her. With the king fled hither
The town is like a tomb dead-garlanded.
I, who this selfsame week was to have wed,
Am like to die a virgin, being called —
The maidens decked, as one might almost say,
And the libation poised above the altar —
Called with new relays to attend her spouse
And sing these dull songs to him evermore.
Belarion, too, our nuptial rites delayed,
Grows angry in his speech.

AGAMEDE

Then thou hast speech
With him? 'T is of Belarion I would warn thee
As one who hates the Queen and would rejoice
To see the end of this long dynasty.
How gains he access to thee, and for what?

STILBE

He is a man of promise. Heard you not
What the oracle declared?

AGAMEDE (*after a pause*)

Who is this woman?
Not she who suckled at the same fond breast,
Sicilian Praxinoë's, with her
She rails on now — bred up in watchful care
Her foster-sister in Athenian halls!

STILBE

Milk is not blood; and even blood will chill
Before a thwarted love — such love as mine!

AGAMEDE

Such love as thine? Why, girl, thou 'rt mad! Dost
dream
That ever love hath sprung from such a soul?
[STILBE *laughs scornfully.*

Ah! The old tale — that thou wast courted first
When Uchomo to Athens came. Why, that
Belongs among the old forgotten things.

STILBE (*starting away*)

Oh, some remember still. Yea, even yet
This royal pair among the oleanders
Shall well remember! [AGAMEDE *follows her.*
Do not follow me.
I, too, have biddings. Follow not, I say!
I 'll cry and start Edessa's dreamer up
Where he lies dozing in her arms! I 'll shriek!

AGAMEDE (*in a low voice as they move into the trees*)

Poor, blighted flower! What thou revealest me
Confirms injurious whispers round thy name
Of poisonous growths about thee, poisoning thee.
I will know all. I will not leave thy side
Till the last shred thou dost confess to me.
[*Exeunt among the trees.*

II. MORNING

Four hours later.

The PHYSICIAN *is discovered near the sun-dial, nervously pacing a short distance to and fro.*
Enter ANANIAS *with attendants, from the gate which is swung open for him by guards.*

PHYSICIAN (*starting towards him*)

At last! Thrice welcome home, Lord Ananias!

ANANIAS

I greet thee. Pray, call not Cleonis yet;
My courier told me of her weariness.
Sit here. How hath the King done in mine absence?

[*He hands the* PHYSICIAN *to a place on the settle and remains standing. During the following he paces slowly and firmly to and fro before the dais, pausing occasionally with military abruptness.*

PHYSICIAN

I scarce had hoped myself to have the honour
Of your advices. The Asklepiad
Came not along?

ANANIAS

How doth my lord the King?
He hath not rashly left this healing place?
Be brief. How is his fever, sir?

PHYSICIAN

My lord,
Last night I deemed his fever slower, stole
Forth for an hour to offer up to Paion
Such rites as the old, pious world pronounced
For his disease, and left him soothed in sleep —
Or so he seemed — the Attic women singing
Hygeia's hymn, with pæans to the god;
And she, Cleonis, by his couch. — Ah, sir,
She hath not left his side this many a week,
But they together wander all the day
About these gardens or within the palace;
And nights she lays her down beside his bed
Upon her ready pallet, not content
To let sweet slumber steal her cares away
Till first she see him peaceful. Like a child
Is she for the mild beauty of her love.

ANANIAS

I ask for news. Pray, sir, how is the King?

PHYSICIAN

I left him with a sleeper's pulse, moist-lipped;
The low lamp softly shining, at his head
His faithful Karamanian, on his breast
The Queen's light hand that gently rose and fell
With his deep breaths, and all the medicines
Of my prognosis ranged conveniently; —
For, though I follow Erasistratos,
That learned doctor at Seleukos' court,
Our art's chief glory, in him I love less
What Hippokrates and the school of Kos
Instilled, and rather take his slant to Knidos:
Each humour of the four three changes hath,
And each degree of change hath its own drugs.

ANANIAS

Great Zeus! I had not guessed that so profound
My question was!

PHYSICIAN

In due course, Chamberlain.
I, anxious, on returning through the halls,
Hearing clear voices from the royal chamber,
Sped thither. — One brief hour away, so long
As might suffice to lay fresh myrrh and vervain,
From Epidaurus which Cleonis hath
For healing rituals, on Apollo's shrine.—

Found him, despite all previous reproofs,
Risen from rest and pacing round his floor
Dressed as for journeys, girded with his blade.
The Queen, who calmlier looked, sat meekly by,
And I did overhear much feverish talk
Of dreams and sloth, and work and war; and, last,
I made it clear he sudden had resolved
No longer here within this wholesome house
To tarry, but so soon as you, my lord,
Your grateful presence should again bestow
Upon this troubled realm, he would return
With all the court unto Edessa.

ANANIAS

Well,
What more heardst thou a-listening?

PHYSICIAN

Only what
One may while in surprise held hesitant.
He spoke of these two months awaiting you
And this Jerusalem thaumaturgus whom
Strangely he sets much hope on; but in chief
He did reproach himself for idling here,
For, "whom the gods will bow must face the gods
With a self yet unbowed," quoth he; "Both selves
Of me are rotting here. What malady
Save sloth consumes both soul and body too?"

ANANIAS

'T was wisely listened, and remembered well.
Passing the rest, let us arrive at length
To where thou vanquishedst surprise. What then?

PHYSICIAN

I then, with my sick-room authority,
Drew back the arras and appeared to them,
Placed soporific leaves upon the brazier,
Besought Cleonis leave us for her chamber,
And proffered Abgar a composing draught.

What think you? Rather than accept my skill
And the soft dulling ministries of drugs
That bring the body rest, he spurns my hand,
And rising violently on his bed
Commands Cleonis stay and me depart!
I wavered 'twixt two judgments; but I saw
Such glance of anger under his dark brow
I turned and left him in his weakness. Since
All which I have been deep distraught to know
How him I serve, and, I do swear you, love,
I may best bring to reason.

ANANIAS

'T will be hard.
Exasperation is an angry wound
Thy surgery but inflames, Asklepios.
Keep thou remote from him: there's means for thee.

PHYSICIAN

Thank you, my lord! I am rejoiced to find
Your first so like my last deliberation!
It will be best to leave him for a space,
Perhaps until he send for me; and yet
I love him and I would not seem displeased.

Voice of a GUARD

None pass without the royal sign!

Voice of a MESSENGER

Behold it.

[*Enter* MESSENGER, *in haste. Bows and presents despatches to* ANANIAS.

MESSENGER

These from the prefect Mithradates — beg
Instant reply.

ANANIAS (*Reads. Takes stylus and tablet from girdle and writes hurriedly*)

To Mithradates this.

[*Exit* MESSENGER.

Here's service for you if you love our lord:
Read over this despatch and make it yours;

[*Writes. He gives the* PHYSICIAN *the* MESSENGER'S *despatch.*

Then to the city post, seek out these men,
Both veterans in the service of this house
And scarred in old campaigns against its foes.
Speak with them privily. Antigonus
Will summon guards, and John the Magistrate
Suppress the public brawl with sterner force
Than this seal's lack would warrant him.

[*He seals with a ring two packets, and gives them to the* PHYSICIAN.

PHYSICIAN

This hour
Doth Abgar with Cleonis haunt this spot.
You 'll meet him here, my lord; 't is better so.
His humour is more genial in the air
For taking news of ill. Commend my love
With an apology to Abgar who,
Knowing the pressure, will condone mine absence.
One thing: Tell him not all at once; but first
Only as darkening probabilities
Assert them, then —

ANANIAS

'T is sixteen stadia thither,
And thou must seek Antigonus by noon.
Pray, get to horse at once.
The Queen approaches;
She must not know the matter of our speech.

PHYSICIAN

I go. [*Exit.*

[*Enter* CLEONIS *from the portico.*

CLEONIS

Friend!

ANANIAS (*kneeling*)

Lo, I am returned, dear Queen.

CLEONIS (*raising him, smiling sadly*)

What weary journeys we have all been taking!

ANANIAS

I would all had such welcome at the end.

CLEONIS (*seating herself upon the dais*)

These many weeks hath Abgar longed for you
With a deep, earnest longing of the soul.
A brief dull slumber torn from fever's rage
Now binds him; for his nights are tedious.
You have been informed as much but now?

ANANIAS

As much,
But with more rhetoric.

CLEONIS

The poor old leech
Is very learned, but his ministries
Have not availed. I look with perfect hope
Toward the arrival of the Healer. So
Tell me of him, and of your travel, all,
And Uchomo shall straightway learn from me.

ANANIAS

"All" is summed up in this: the thought of him
Whose body's rest I'd give my life to win.

CLEONIS

Your absence lent us pause to measure you:
Your putting by of prejudice, your pure,
Yea, sacrificial friendship. Oft whole days
As he hath paced these prisoning gardens round,
Subduing his proud soul within a frame
Inadequate, that he might bear the long
And well-nigh insupportable delay
Of the great Healer's answer, then of you,
Of your long, tireless vigilance, your strong
Mid-manhood's quiet, unprotesting love,
To me he spake. And once he said, "Of such
I'll build my state when I am whole again;
Or, lacking others like him, base all there!"

ANANIAS

Only the usual grace my service bears
Of an hereditary loyalty
To worth unusual. I served Bar-Abgar;
My father, his. I am a soldier, plain,
And not much given to visions; yet sometimes
For Uchomo there 's bred in my regard
A sudden tenderness for that he dreams,
Moving along some higher plane than ours,
And seeks to found our city in his dreams.

CLEONIS

And never will our dull world learn that dreams
Are all that fact hath ever issued from.
But yet you have not spoken of the Healer.
I had dared half-believe that he would come
Prepared to make our palace his abode,
As ran our invitation sent by you.
Much did this thought alleviate his pain
While Abgar yearned for that strong being's touch.
Delay suits not his temper, and I fear
The issue. — He but follows you? His train
Could not accommodate them to your haste?
[*A pause. She speaks with growing anxiety.*
How long must we await him?

ANANIAS

O Cleonis,
Forgive that I ne'er learned the courtier's phrase
To sweeten bitter news! Your heart is strong,
Made so in many troubles early borne.

CLEONIS (*smothering her fear*)

Only as it must seem for Uchomo.
I am too weak a woman to bear well
A loved one's pain.

ANANIAS

His pain so much is thine
That 't will be bravely borne, dear Queen. Know, then,
The Hebrew prophet, called the Nazarene,
Declined Edessa's princely offer.

CLEONIS (*leaning forward in excitement*)

Ah,
Avert such woe, Athena Paionia!

ANANIAS (*approaching her as he speaks, and seating himself at the opposite end of the dais*)

This is the hardest part of all my mission.
Compared to this, those stony Syrian hills
Are smoother than the broad Palmyran road.

I know not of what power that Healer worked,
Nor if he wrought at all the cures they tell,
Having seen his face but once. He had a look
Most kind. I thought of Uchomo's fair brow,
And of the steady light of his deep eyes
When he discourses of his ideal city.

CLEONIS (*meditatively*)

They say he, too, hath powerful enemies.

ANANIAS

From whom the court of Abgar promised refuge.

Jerusalem swarmed. From up and down the kingdom
Thronged the barbarians for their sacrifice.
It seems their god hath rites that once each year
In the mid-spring exact their celebrations;
And I must hit it at the very time
When all their hostels choke, and every hole
Teems with their tribesmen gaunt from hill and plain.
It was most fortunate I had of you
The letter to the lady Berenis.
She, as Tiberius' niece, holds high estate
Amongst the Romans of Jerusalem.
As for the servants of our retinue,

They needs must fare ill, like the pilgrims. Me
She of her generous hospitality
Most courteously those days did entertain
In honour of the Osrhoenic House
Whose latest prince by fair repute she loves
For his just laws and life.
From her I heard
Much of this preaching carpenter who builds
Such wondrous edifice of charity
Amongst those fierce uncharitable Jews,
And something of his marvellous cures, on which
I pressed much question while within her gates.
Berenis, having friends among his school,
Herself a half-disciple, unrevealed
For reasons politic, obtained me one
Philip, a humble Galilean, who
Through the packed alleys entered where he taught
And learned an hour when we more privately
Together might converse. I sought him then,
This Philip guiding me, in Bethany,
A hamlet up an olive-sprinkled hill
Just out the eastern walls. There found we him
Surrounded by the trees and some few friends,
The village gentry whose loved guest he was.

[*Beckons to an attendant and takes a parchment scroll from a casket in the attendant's hand.*

CLEONIS

Tell me of his appearance. What said he?

ANANIAS

He had prepared this scroll and gave it me
With courteous words, yet, as I after thought,
Most singularly free from deference
For one who ranks with artisans. His look
Betrayed no satisfaction with our suit;
Yet he did emanate a grave respect
Which seemed habitual, much as Stoics use,
Yet kinder; and his bearing had more grace
Than any Jew's I ever saw before.

As for his words, I own I scarce recall them,
And have been wondering ever since that I,
Bred at a court and tutored to brave deeds,
Should be so sudden silenced. For I stood
Obedient to unknown authorities
Which spake in eye and tone and every move,
In that his first mild answer of refusal.
He seemed to have foreknowledge of our case; —
Mayhap the Galilean gave him news
Of our perplexity and long delay
In matters urgent to the city's welfare
Which I had hinted of to Berenis.
He looked on me with such compassionate gaze

I had an impulse to renew my plea;
But he, as if he read my inmost mind,
Bade me tell Abgar to contemplate this
[*Indicating the scroll.*
And shortly all should be made clear to him.

CLEONIS

Are *you* he who would yield his life to win
Peace for his tortured master's body? Shame!
Oh, had I gone I would have so besought him,
And stormed him with the passion of my prayers,
That he had never dared refuse me! Love,
Love 't was you lacked to burn your words in him!
Had you loved Abgar even as duty bids,
Even as your father loved Bar-Abgar when
He made the pilgrimage to Epidaurus
And slept upon the slain goat's skin, and begged
Asklepios' image for his master's life,
And so prevailed; — oh, had you loved one half
As yonder Karamanian slave who stands
All night on guard at Abgar's weary head; —
Or even one little, little part as I
Who, a poor helpless girl, can only stroke
The feverish temples, hold the throbbing wrist —
Oh, you had begged with tears, and he had come
And healed the hidden canker of our lives!

ANANIAS (*arising*)

My love counts not its duties; nor, I think,
Is love summed up in all its victories:
'T is larger, and includes defeat. In this
All I could do I did, since there was power
Would dumb the boldest suitor. Written here
Is his deliberate determination.

CLEONIS (*arising. Her fingers are strained together*)

I 'll go myself and grovel on my knees!
He who hath made the leper whole, hath caused
The blinded eyes to flood with heaven's light,
And, O ye gods! they say restored the dead —
Him shall I travel to by night and day,
And, having found, shall warm so with my tears
That his indifference shall melt away
Like April ice upon Hymettus. Oh!

[*She sinks, weeping, to the seat.*

ANANIAS (*gently*)

Cleonis, I have twice thy years. I know
Both love from hate, and duty from indifference.
'T was only love for Abgar took me hence
In perilous times; and it was not indifference
Detained the man: a thing to ponder on.

CLEONIS

Show me the way to him, I do command you!

ANANIAS

Your journey to him would be all in vain,
Your prayers and tears in vain, unless, as some
He lived among believed, he was a god
Who may be sought by sorrow anywhere.

CLEONIS

What mean you?

ANANIAS

He is dead.

CLEONIS

So are the gods, then!
Say on.

ANANIAS

Even as I tarried the last day
At the kind house of Berenis, we heard
He was condemned to death. My mission done,
I bade my horsemen make all ready, spurred
Out of the city, and with haste departed.

CLEONIS

What, waited not to search the matter out!
Subsequent haste might well have bought you hours
To learn this master's fate! How then, say you
They killed him? On what charge proved they his guilt?

ANANIAS

That I know not. It seemed a common clamour
For blood — not blood of guilt, but innocence.
Their god must have, it seems, a human victim
Along with the twice seven-score thousand lambs
They slay at each of these strange feasts of theirs.

CLEONIS

What time stayed you within their savage city?

ANANIAS

Three days. My interview was Wednesday. On
The Friday as I left the lady's gate,
She with her household gave us company
Unto the open highway, and there called
Afresh on us the favour of the gods
To cheer our long return.
Just down the street
We, not ten paces from the friendly door,
Beheld a noisy rabble that so pressed

The narrowing way, we reined our steeds aside
To wait its passage. 'T was a dreadful sight:
A criminal condemned by Roman law
To drag the wretched beam he was to die on,
As is the usage towards the baser sort
Who should not stain the honourable sword,
Surrounded by a hateful mob kept off
By the centurions of the procurator.

CLEONIS

What poor, doomed wretch was he? — Oh, 't was not
— not . . .

ANANIAS

As they drew nearer, from my horse I saw him.
And it was he; but that I only learned
By the loud banter of the bullying crowd.
He had transgressed some law those Hebrews have,
And went to pay for it upon the cross.
As the way widened past the high-walled house
Of Berenis, the throng thinned, and I saw
Plainer the moving figure of the man
And the huge beam laid on him. Suddenly
From the great gate I saw a form dart forth
Straight towards him, pause and seem to have some
speech
With the condemned, as, by old privilege,
Sometimes the pious ladies do with those

Who tread the shameful road. Her speech was brief.
She turned, and, as I saw 't was Berenis,
Towards me she came, and her eyes, wet with tears,
Smiled sadly, as she said these final words:

"Such shame a mighty purpose led him to,
Yet he shrinks not, but steadfast to this end
Inevitable hath he come his way.
A woman of my house was healed of him
By kissing once the border of his garment.
Take your King this, and say that as he dragged
His cruel but chosen cross to his own doom,
Some comfort in its cooling web he found,
And left a blessing in its pungent folds."

[*He takes a small square of linen from his bosom.*

A keenly odorous linen from her hand
I laid within my bosom next the scroll.
And so we said farewell, and I spurred on,
The hoarse mob's laughter down the blazing street
Making us glad to quit the fearful city.

[*He gives the linen into the hand of* Cleonis.

Cleonis

Oh, let them never leave their quiet hills,
These prophets that dream well for all the world!
Let them remain in mountains far from man
Where nothing fiercer than the lion roams,

Communing with the kindly elements —
The earth that is their mother, and the winds
That are such spirits' brothers, and the fire
Of splendid storms that like their words breaks forth,
And waters that flow out like their great love!
They are of other worlds and strangers here:
Let them remain in mountains — or in gardens!

ANANIAS

Ay, but we need such in this world of men.

CLEONIS

Ye need them as the tiger needeth blood!
Come, show me one great soul that taught you good
Whom your wild world would have; one bold emprise
Without Protesilaus at the prow?

The Carthaginians exiled Hannibal;
The Romans, Scipio; Cicero they stabbed;
Athens gave Socrates the poison cup
Because she feared his truth; Jerusalem
Doth crucify him who would make her whole.

O Ananias, this thy tale for me
Brings ominous forebodings. Pray, beseech
With all your long-used freedom that the King
Go not yet to the city. I have heard
Slight rumours of a restless populace

That, like caged eagles, fight the hand would free,
And look suspiciously on Uchomo.
Is it not true that gathering troubles brood
Within the city?

ANANIAS

Yes.

CLEONIS

I felt it. Now
Give me the whole truth. I 've the heart for it.

ANANIAS (*handing her the* MESSENGER'S *despatch*)

This word but now despatched to me tells all.

[*A pause. She reads.*

CLEONIS

'T is all my fears condensed into a line.
Now must your prayers with mine urge him remain.
Towards evening, at the old accustomed hour,
Here meet us and conclude your narrative
Which I will give to Uchomo complete
Up to the Healer's shameful death; and that
Will I in silence leave till custom dull
The lesser sadness.
Are the guards informed?
Is all precaution taken?

ANANIAS

All is ready;
But I go now to double-warn his watch
Against the morrow. Be not anxious. We
Who long have served this house will prove our love.
[*Exit.*

CLEONIS

Bear with me, Ananias. My heart aches.

III. AFTERNOON

Eight hours later.

The full court is assembled, with ABGAR, CLEONIS, ANANIAS, *and* ATTENDANTS. *Afterwards,* AGAMEDE.

ABGAR *is seated at the end of the stone settle nearest the portico. His right arm rests on the back of the seat, its hand supporting his head. His gaze is fixed upon the distant city, so as to leave discernible only the left side of his face. His soldierly short black hair and strong profile are accentuated by the eager forward thrusting of the neck. A flowing white chlamys is thrown aside from his left shoulder, revealing a severe military dress. The free hand rests upon and clasps the hilt of a sword suspended at the hip.*

CLEONIS *sits full front, a little removed from* ABGAR, *on the settle, her hands folded before her, and her head resting somewhat wearily against the high back of the seat. Her garment is a peplus of azure wool.*

ANANIAS *sits below her on the steps at her right, his gaze directed to* ABGAR. *His attitude, that of interrupted narration, presents the right*

side of his face and form profiled against the oleander leaves. A scroll lies open in his hands.

The Slave-boy *stands in waiting at some distance on the ground to the left of* Abgar, *immediately behind whom stands his great* Body Slave.

In the middle background, grouped in the foliage, stand the Queen's women in fresh garments of various bright colours.

Armed guards are stationed in the extreme background.

The soft light of advancing dusk fills the garden, but the undulating plain seen through the trees, and the white walls of the city, are suffused with rich sunlight.

Music of lyres. The women are singing.

Chorus

Ægina's foam is high and wild
Where Pan immortal sits enisled;
But thou and I with flying oar
Seek Psyttaleia's sacred shore.

The City of the Violet Crown
Well knows that rocky island's frown;
But thou and I together learned
What fires upon her altars burned.

Oh, many a sail goes gleaming there
Bound for some olive-garden fair;
But thou and I made fast to her
And found her cypress lovelier.

The shrines of Aphrodite lift
Their smoke in every village-rift;
But thou and I remote from man
Propitiate the Woodland Pan.

[*As the song ends,* Cleonis *waves dismissal to the women.*

Abgar

More music while I think. Some martial air.
There 's one of Alexander's men. Sing that.

Cleonis (*speaking over-shoulder to the women*)

That song of Arbela.

(*To herself*)

Unsoothing sound!

Chorus

I see the Macedonian's foes
Where Zab, the fatal river, flows;
A million, chariot and horse,
And spearmen of the Persian's force

Orontes and the Euxine gave,
The Oxus and the Caspian wave;
Jaxartes, Kashgar, Indus, far
Swell the bright rushing tide of war!

I see the Persian innermost
Of all his vast assembled host,
Around him in protecting groups
Legions of mercenary troops:

Melophori, and Mardian bows,
Albanians, Carians interpose,
With Indian elephants, between
The monarch and his foe unseen.

A score and five the nations are
Preceded by the scythéd car,
And Cappadocia's cavalry
For numbers like the waving sea.

Who comes upon them? O'er the plain
The Macedonian sweeps amain!
I see his phalanx solid-speared. . . .

ABGAR (*arising suddenly*)

'T is thus a world 's won! Alexander led
But two-score thousand men, but them he led!

Ha, how the many-captained Persians ran
Before that Godlike youth!

[*He unsheathes his sword and diagrams on the ground.*

Darius' centre,
Bared of the Bactrian cohorts at his left
Who would outflank the slantwise charging right
Of Macedon, exposed both front and side
To Alexander's horse and spearmen. Here
Plunged in that son of Philip, whose assault
Filled the great King with terror, so he fled
Treading his crumbled empire in the dust.

[*He drops to his seat, taking former position.*

Yet Alexander and Darius both
Are dead. And what avail the conqueror
Issus and Arbela? — Do they comfort him
Down there among the shades? What victory
Won Alexander that his naked soul
May deck him with where dwelleth Socrates?

[*A pause. He turns, quietly, addressing* ANANIAS.

Conclude the Hebrew's letter, Ananias.

ANANIAS (*reading*)

"As to the part of your epistle which
Concerns my going hence to visit you,
Know that I have a mission to fulfil
In mine own city, and must here remain

Till all its ends be satisfied. Yet you
Of your infirmity shall know full cure,
And those most dear to you have peace.

"Farewell."

CLEONIS

See, he *doth* promise healing! Reads not more
On any margin, or betwixt the lines,
To indicate how such a joy may be?

ANANIAS

Nay, I have now read every word to you.

CLEONIS (*bending forward*)

Hand me the letter.

[ANANIAS *arises, and gives her the scroll.*

Why, these very lines
We did pass over lightly, they seemed charged
With hidden meaning. [*She reads, thoughtfully.*

"Abgar, forasmuch
As ye believed on me whom ye knew not,
Shall happiness be yours. For it is wrote
Concerning me that they should not believe
Who have beheld, that those who dwell afar
And see not might have faith and life abundant."

See you not something there, O Abgar?

ABGAR

Much.

Did I not ask for music, hearing that?

I shall be healed! The ebbing springs of life
Will flow again as full they flowed of yore!
My city, O my city! thou shalt know
Again the joyous tread of other days,
When all thy booths and palaces and shrines
With multitudes of helpless, longing folk
First knew me theirs to build, protect, and love!

I have not yet resolved the Healer's words
Into clear meaning; but their crystal soon
In the still cup of contemplation may
Give up its precious drug to heal our cares.
What said he of it, Ananias? "Shortly
Should all be clear that 's written in this scroll"?

ANANIAS

Those are the words, my lord, in giving me
His answer spake the Nazarene.

ABGAR

Consider.
I offered him my realm's protection; peace;
A sanctuary of philosophy;

And a disciple not without an arm. [*A pause.*
Now, more than ever, do I long to see him;
What won my reverence now provokes my love.
His city hates him. Oh, that he were here!
[*He springs to his feet, and paces up and down the dais.*

ANANIAS

I think, my lord, he weighed all this, so firm
His speech revealed him, as if all debate
He, silent, had passed through at once forever.

ABGAR (*eagerly*)

How well thou hast divined this sort of soul!
Planted upon his rock, he sees all else
As drift and wreckage of the stormy seas
That surge around him, yet can touch him not.

There is but one decision for such man,
And, after that, concession, compromise,
Expediency — these enter not at all
Into the fabric of his meditation.
To such death is not. For untainted is
The source of life, and solid is the rock.
To those who go down in the trough upon
Their own poor broken spar, that rock is hid

With him upon it, and they call him dead.
I will send other embassies to him —
Not importuning him, but to have words
To ponder on, or, maybe, go myself,
For I already feel renewed within
By the great soul of him who hath opposed me.

CLEONIS (*approaching* ABGAR, *and laying her hands in his*)

Uchomo, hast thou all the love for me
That thou didst woo me with those perfect days
Amid the cloves and laurels where the sea
Flung its white arms among Ægina's isles?
Still the old love that bore me in our barque
Far on those sunlit waters where but faint
The cry of men, and even the gleam of sails,
Came to us in our niche among the hills?

Yes, yes, I know! I ask to be assured
By the old light rekindled in thine eyes.

O Uchomo, the constancy of love
Hath not performed its service until pain
Doth weld both hearts inseparably.
Not all
At once to-day did I repeat to thee
Of what our Ananias hath brought back.

ABGAR

I felt that more would come in love's own time.

CLEONIS (*taking the linen from her bosom*)

This brought he back to thee with him. It bears
The dying benediction of the Man.

She who bestows it, lady Berenis,
Invoked his healing power upon its folds.

ABGAR

His city slew him?

CLEONIS

Took away his life!

ABGAR (*receiving the linen*)

Not that! For he shall live forever here,
And in the bosoms of philosophers.
Such life shall grow and blossom, and bear fruit —
Yea, here in mine own city shall it grow!

[*A pause. He turns away suddenly, with outspread arms, and uplifted head.*

I feel it now! All through these withered veins
I feel it bound and glow! O life, life, life!

[*He clasps* CLEONIS *in his arms.*

[*Voices at the gate. Enter from thence* AGAMEDE, *exhausted. Her long, white garment of the morning is stained and disarranged, and her grey hair is loose. She walks uncertainly towards the dais.*

[CLEONIS, *in surprise, runs and supports her in her embrace.*

AGAMEDE (*breathless*)

Yet not for this — this even — deem friendship vain,
And sister a light name! — Vow that to me!

CLEONIS

Sweet sister Agamede!

ABGAR (*to Slave-boy*)

Fetch her wine.

[*Boy brings wine, of which* AGAMEDE *partakes.*

(*Lifting his hands to her*)

Be sure of us, dear Agamede! All
Assembled here are bound to thee by love
And thy long, tender years of care for us.
The world is full of beauty, strength, and love!

[CLEONIS *leads* AGAMEDE *to a seat, and sits beside her comfortingly. A pause.*

AGAMEDE (*to* CLEONIS)

What words and looks are these from Uchomo?
Oh, was it all a frightful dream that I
Since dawn this day have fought with Nemesis?

CLEONIS

That was thy dream, dear one.

ABGAR

Some dream this was.

AGAMEDE

Thou splendid youth! What god hath wrought on thee
Whilst I was dreaming? Came he hither, then,
That Galilean Healer long desired?

ABGAR

Thou seest me healed by him. We dream no more.

AGAMEDE (*passing a hand over her eyes*)

Oh, but I dreamt not!
(*Reluctantly*)
Abgar, of thy house
One hath turned traitor and conspired with those
Who long have wished thee ill. More, too, I find,

O King: lords Umbar and Athmantides
Have been beset by the wild populace
And are imprisoned by them in the Tower.

ABGAR

How learn you this?

AGAMEDE

Fresh from those scenes I come.

CLEONIS *and* ABGAR

What! From the city thou?

CLEONIS

What stains are these?
What woe hath overtaken thee?

ABGAR

Spare not.
A great peace dwells in this abode. Not thou,
O wife of Glaucon, canst bring anguish here,
Nor bow our hearts with any woe but thine;
On which, if aught there be, the kingdom shall
Be spent for remedies. Speak slowly all.

AGAMEDE

It is my woe, mine own familiar woe
As I had learned it in forgotten ages.
Two kinds of woe which I had known before
Shall never seem so old a woe as this;
And there is ransom from all other kinds,
When we go back into the earth; but this,
Once known, shall be a terror in the soul
And in Elysium even cloud it o'er
With memories that Lethe cannot quell!

ANANIAS

'T were well to speak directly of this matter.

AGAMEDE (*to* ABGAR)

Forgive, O Abgar, first, that how and why
I came into the city, or with whom,
I now conceal. Let it suffice that one
I followed fleeing thither who confessed,
In part because I persecuted so,
In part that, sure of their complete design,
The traitors fear not now if it be known.

What I found in the city first I tell:
Of all your officers of public works
Who build and broaden, cleanse and sweep away,
These twain have most incurred the rabble's wrath,

The stewards Umbar and Athmantides;
Because their duties — as chief overseers
Of the new sewers — do seem sacrilege
In that the city's soil so deep is dug
That antique gods of stone, once worshipped there
By the old Syrian fathers of the folk,
Have been disturbed in their forgotten slumbers.
And certain who oppose themselves to all
The strange reforms that are pushed forward so,
Have used this pretext of indignant gods
To stir the people and arrest the works.

ABGAR

How comes it Delius lets the mobs prevail?
Where is Belarion that such passion rules?

AGAMEDE

Belarion 't is — I choke to say his name! —
Who stirs them to revenge.

ABGAR

Athmantides
And Umbar have their sovereign's instant care.
My chariot and guard within an hour
Shall bear me to Edessa.

(*To* SLAVE-BOY)

Hasten, boy;
Bid Moschus have the new Arabians combed,
And all prepared for travel in the hour.

[*Exit* SLAVE-BOY.

What! is it thus, my city, whom these dreams
Have glorified with perfectness? And ye,
O people of my ceaseless watch and care,
Could ye not be content a little while
Till my poor body was made sound for you?

CLEONIS (*in pain*)

Uchomo, I forbid thee leave our sight!

ANANIAS

Nay, Abgar, go not!

CLEONIS

Thou wilt straight undo
All the slow betterment of these long weeks.

ANANIAS

My word commands, being given authority.
The seal I bear persuades with eloquence.

ABGAR (*sitting. He looks towards the city*)

I am the King. From my deliberation,
Revolved in silence when the world 's asleep,
I am not easy moved by hate or love,
Nor do I rise by impulse to bold deeds;
But it hath ever been my studious care
So ripened for emergency to be
That through my meditations naught can fall
I may not welcome with the fittest deed.

CLEONIS

Yet go not! Oh, thou knowest not!

ANANIAS

Our tongues
Till now were justified in secrecy.
I must inform you, Abgar, that a band
Of impious men who fear nor god nor man
Plot for your life. A treble guard is placed
Around these walls lest any of their spies
Steal to you unperceived; while yonder now
Within the city trusty officers
Under the Prefect Mithradates' eye
Take evidence to blot out that perfidy.

AGAMEDE

For days hath nested 'twixt these garden walls
A withered and implacable Erinys
Ready to give the signal for assault.
It wanted only Ananias' presence
To ripen it, and they intend this night
With all the force Belarion can assemble
To make attack. 'T is no mere mutiny.
Beginning such, the poison hath been spread
Till now a revolution threatens all.
This flew I back to tell the sentinels
And Ananias' guard which paces here.

CLEONIS (*as though suddenly enlightened*)

Where is Stilbe?

AGAMEDE (*shrinking*)

There is no Stilbe more.

ABGAR (*placing one hand out upon the heads of the two women, who have drawn together, and with the other inviting* ANANIAS *up to a seat beside him*)

Peace, peace! They have but once to see their King
Strong as of old, and riding with his guard!
(*To a* SLAVE)
Ho, Imbros, run to Moschus and make speed
With preparations for departure. Standards,

Torches and all the trappings of the mews
Provide my escort. See all busy. Thou,
(*To his* Body Slave)
Gyges, make ready the new armour — that
Tiberius had forged and sent to me
From Capri. — They will cheer the casque of gold.
[*Exit* Slaves.
You, faithful friends, and thou, Cleonis, hearken.
[*During the following, the scene gradually darkens till the garden is left entirely in the dusk. Then a few stars shine through the trees, and the moon begins to rise.*
Last night, to complement two wondrous dreams
Had on the two preceding nights, there came
A third, most vivid, and most wonderful.

In the first vision like to this I dreamed:
I stood upon a height. Spread out below,
Dark, silent, shapeless, a vast city — dead —
Where in far ages of this furrowed world
Strong men and women took their taste of life.
All now was desolation absolute;
And through that wreck of fortress, mart and fane,
And fallen mausoleum crowded o'er
With characters for evermore unread,
Only the wind's soft hands went up and down

Scattering the obliterative sands.
I, led in trance by shapes invisible,
Approached a temple's splendid architrave
Half sunk in sod betwixt its columns' bases,
And there by sudden divination read
The deep-cut legend of that awful gate:

APPEASE WITH SACRIFICE THE UNKNOWN POWERS.

Between the roofless, tottering pillars there
A countless flock had fed the holocaust —
Numberless innocents drenched the steaming altars,
Outpouring their propitiative blood.
And prayers and tears and cringings of a world
Through them did seek the appeasing way — in vain.
And the black night came down upon my dream.

Next night I found me in a twilit place
Wherein the same compelling, gentle hands
Held me. And from mine eminence I saw
A newer city builded on like dust —
A trodden sand that could afford to wait.
Streets hummed, and multitudes on multitudes
Along their river-quays, in highways broad,
Or up their little ramifying lanes,
Unceasing plied their single life away.
They toiled, or played, or fought, or sued the gods,

Absorbed each in his own peculiar lust,
As if there were no morrow watching them;
Yet each was happier in the morrow-dream
Than ever in all achievéd yesterdays.

I was so high above them as to see
Their little deeds and mean anxieties,
Wholly, as one surveys a mound of ants
At their laborious atom industries.
Above them spread the splendid heavens filled
With palpitating sunlight; all around,
The sources inexhaustible of life,
And plenitudes of peace. But there they swarmed,
Striving — some bravely; offering — some in truth;
But all with inward thought and eyes on earth.
And so I saw them grow, and grieve, and die.

And as I looked, I saw a man who long
In upward meditation on his roof
Sat all alone, communing with his soul.
And he arose, and presently went down,
Down in the long black streets among his kind,
And there with patience taught them steadfastly.
But, for the restless souls he made in them,
They turned and slew him and went on their ways.
And a great fog crept up and covered all.

Again the third time I was lifted up.
A mighty, living, beautiful walled town,
A-wave with trees, lay shining on the plain.
And underneath her walls a river glided,
Safe bearing her full many a peaceful sail.
And there lived folk who all day worked and sang,
And folks that to and fro sped silently;
And here and there some sat apart and thought.
From all whom throbbed a joy in unison
With the warm earth and her enfolding heavens;
Through all, the strong, perpetual streams of life
That through the universe unceasing flow.
And this dream ended not with cloud or mist,
But slow receded in its radiance
Till it grew small as towers and sails and stream
That whiten yonder to the rising moon.
And as it went I heard a voice that said:
"Thou, Abgar, art the King of cities three:
The Past, the Present, and the Yet-to-Come.
Out of the Past the Present by slow pain
And undiscerning upward agonies;
Out of the Present, by as many throes,
The city of Celestial Harmony."

Then faded all, and I awoke and saw
Through the wide window of my prison here

My city gleaming on its tree-plumed levels,
And waiting in its troubled sleep — for me!

Fear not for me: I go unto the city.

[CLEONIS *clings to* ABGAR'S *neck.* *He, erect, the left arm holding* CLEONIS, *the right pointing to the city which is now full in the light of the risen moon.*

[*The distant noise of preparation for departure fills the garden with sound.*

IV. EVENING

An hour later.

The only light is that of the moon, which enfilades the little open spaces among the leaves and along the ground, and shines full over the open country beyond the garden.

The garden is empty of people. There are sounds of stamping hoofs, shouted orders, hurried footsteps, within the palace and beyond the wall. In the pauses of these sounds far in the distance from the direction of the city come indistinct murmurs like human cries. Presently a faint bugle-call thrice repeated. The sounds decrease.

AGAMEDE *and* CLEONIS *in the shadow of the portico.* AGAMEDE *stands with arms stretched out towards the oleanders, and is softly singing.*

AGAMEDE

Grow, grow, thou little tree,
His body at the roots of thee;
Since last year's loveliness in death
The living beauty nourisheth.

Bloom, bloom, thou little tree,
Thy roots around the heart of me;
Thou canst not blow too white and fair
From all the sweetness hidden there.

Die, die, thou little tree,
And be as all sweet things must be;
Deep where thy petals drift I, too,
Would rest the changing seasons through.

CLEONIS

Let us sit here and wait for Uchomo.
[*They sit on the steps of the portico.*
These last strange quiet moments spent with thee
Have wrought some change in me, I know not what.
Whereas I was half-girl, this day of storm,
O woman of sorrow, hath made me calm as thou;
Hath shown me heights and deeps, and swallowed up
All fear of death or life. We are secure.

AGAMEDE

Not in an hour was wrought this change in thee.
Thyself hast wrought it day by day in toil
For what thou lovest, forgetting what thou art.
These final moments show thyself to thee.

CLEONIS

Thou hast known all these things for many years.

[*Enter* ABGAR, *armed, wearing his golden helmet.*

[*He bends over* CLEONIS, *who arises and joins him. They descend to the garden.*

[AGAMEDE *remains on the steps a moment, her hands extended as in blessing towards the receding pair, then steals into the palace.*

ABGAR

Dost thou, love, feel a strange, new sense of peace?
To me it is as if another air
Had suddenly enveloped our sad earth.

CLEONIS

The atmosphere of oceans tranquillized.

ABGAR

Wherein our barque doth move on steadily
As by some other force than chance of winds.

CLEONIS

In the old days when far we searched the seas
In our light-skimming pinnace, thou and I,
Sometimes it bended in and out the isles

And no wind seemed to have the care of it.
Then thought I, like a foolish, dreaming girl,
That beautiful, strong hands beneath us bore
Our barque of love.
We have lived inland long.

ABGAR

To me there is no inland, having thee!
Our love 's a golden sea set thick with green
And aromatic islands whose shores know
Such wreckage only as bright, tide-plucked flowers
That grow, unguessed, too deep for touch of storm.

Come to our garden-seat. The moment nears
When we must for a little while be parted.
[*They mount the dais and sit.*
[*A pause, during which the murmur from the city is renewed.*
He said that shortly all should be made clear.
I think his words grow plainer to me, yet . . .
Is there no other way our world will learn?

CLEONIS

Only through abnegation's sacrifice;
Only renouncement, that shall raise dead hearts.

None may believe who have beheld, because
This mortal vision makes them blind of soul.

Men may not see with soul and body both:
This now I see who was till now one blind,
And under the charm of fear. The man spake well.

ABGAR

Not distance, nor yet death, shall separate
The souls of those whose vision is made clear.
Lo, he abideth with us evermore
Who would not come to us the way of flesh,
And in the spirit makes us whole.
That mind
Hath turned my course of longing utterly:
I longed for healing only of this flesh
That I might serve my state — asked not for more;
Yet how in his refusal he transcends
My widest prayer!

CLEONIS

"Of your infirmity
Shall you know yet full cure; and those have peace
Who are most dear to you."
That peace is here.

ABGAR

O love, I never saw thee till this hour
So beautiful! How all the world is changed!
Let us grow old together in this way.

CLEONIS

Always together, well or ill betide:
Promise me this, O love — till death's own hour!

ABGAR

Yea! For no ill can ever meet us so!
[*Sound of the chariot at the gate.*

CLEONIS

I have thy promise. Listen, at yon gate
Moschus is standing with the chariot.
I go with thee! Oh, never, never apart!

ABGAR

I will return to thee to-morrow, love.
Stay me not thus; the numbered moments fly.
Knowest thou not I am made strong for this?

CLEONIS (*clinging to him*)

But thou hast said ill cannot meet us so.
Together, always, even to the hour of death!

ABGAR

Yea, that I know! Come, then. Not all earth's power
Shall snatch us twain asunder. To the city!

CLEONIS

It is the promise: Peace and life abundant.

[*They descend to the ground, and are interrupted in their exit by the* BODY SLAVE, *who enters, running, from the palace.*

SLAVE

Flee, flee! Armed bands of thrice our guard's full strength
Ride here!

[*He runs centre, mounting the dais and shading his eyes towards the city.*

I see their helmets on the plain.
O King, your chariot quick! and southward turn:
Thapsacus is our ancient ally. Flee!
That friendly city may be reached in safety.
One of her trading craft lies on the river
Waiting for dawn to slip her anchorage.
Moschus and I will bear you with the Queen
Swift charioting thither.

ABGAR

To Thapsacus,
To the old, noble town where Xenophon
With the Ten Thousand crossed Euphrates' flood,
I, fleeing at night away from foes unseen?

[*He mounts the dais, his arm still encircling*
CLEONIS. *They look towards the city.*

Return thou to thy duty at the postern,
And fortify thy heart with the calm night.
The guards without are ready ; we within
Are confident and undisturbed. [*Exit* Slave.

Cleonis

Look, love,
How beautiful ! Along that road of gold
Which in and out among the new-sown fields
Mocks with its shining course the winding river,
They sparkle like heroic panoplies,
With helmet, shield, and spear beneath the moon.

Abgar

It is indeed, most beautiful and strange.

[*They stand some moments in silence, facing the city and the open country, and watching the advance of the troops. Again the sullen murmur of the city. Twice or thrice* Cleonis *lifts her hand to the scene and turns her head half round to* Abgar.

[*The sound of galloping hoofs grows near. The horses at the gate paw and neigh. There are movements among the guard, and within the palace.*

[*A red light flares from one end of the city.*

O city ! many a time and oft have I
Preserved thy peace through toil and bitter pain,

Turning away the foeman from thy gates!
Oh, I have loved with yearnings infinite
Even as a father pitieth his child!
But what can save thee from thyself? Not love.
What needest thou? What wilt thou of me more?
My life? Can that avail thee in the end?
If mortal vision make thee blind of soul
Can death — can that appease, and bring thee sight?

[*There is an onset at the gate.*

[*Enter women from the left, flying into the palace.*

First Woman

Flee, flee!

Second Woman

There's murder at the gate!

Third Woman

Oh, flee!

[*The gate bursts open, but is still defended. The fighting is along the wall.*

[*Enter* Ananias *from the gate, wounded.*

Ananias

Where's Uchomo? Where's Cleonis? Where's my King?

We cannot hold them off. They beat us down
Like sudden whirlwinds. Oh, I think I die.

[CLEONIS *tears a strip from her robe; then, as if by a fortunate recollection, plucks the square of linen from the bosom of* ABGAR, *and binds it over the wound with the strip.*

Oh, cowardly to yield thee up a day
From my long watchful care! Oh, base to turn,
When needed most, even at thy own command!

ABGAR (*supporting him tenderly*)

Dear friend, thou art the other side the loom.
Thou canst not see what wondrous web is wrought
By this blind weaver Fate! All 's well with us.

ANANIAS

Two months — two months away from thee! Indeed
There was delay — the mountain roads were rough.
But — pray, forgive me — this I spake not of:
I made not haste sufficient.
Thanks, dear Queen.
Your touch is like my Chloë's.
This, see thou —
It was among the hills of Lebanon
We met the robbers — on our homeward journey.

I had a wound of them. And even now
It breaks afresh — before Belarion's blade.
Oh . . . oh . . . forgive me, Queen, I brought not back . . .
Brought not . . . the Healer. . . . All I could . . . I did

[*He falls, dying, into the arms of* Abgar, *who lays him gently upon the dais at his feet.*

[*The conflict ends suddenly.*

Voice of Stilbe

The gate! The gate! Edessa shall be free!

[Belarion *bursts through the gate with soldiers, in the midst of whom, borne aloft on the shoulders of slaves, enter* Stilbe *clothed in white and gold, and bearing garlands.*

Stilbe

Hear Ares! Spilth of Persian vintages,
And splendid altar-garlands, laurel and rose!
Thighs of a thousand bulls, great Artemis!

[*In passing, flings a garland to* Abgar.

Thy roses I return thus, Uchomo!

[*She is borne laughing across the garden.*

Ha, but once more Edessa shall be gay!
Yet will I give command that every Spring

One night my women shall remember thee,
O Queen, with love-songs in the garden here.

[*Exit into the palace.*

[*The soldiers of* BELARION *fill the scene. Some with torches pass into the palace, as though to take possession. In the midst of them, enter the* PHYSICIAN, *in terror.*

PHYSICIAN

Drive me not thus, I say. 'T is ill respect
To one of my position. (*Catching sight of* ABGAR.)
O dear King!
Speak not reproachfully that I did fail
To notify Antigonus and John.
I met an ancient actor on the road
Who read a trilogy of Æschylus;
And "Prove thyself the Paion of this dread,"
So ran the line, on which I, pondering, came. . . .

A SOLDIER (*urging him on*)

Come, thou old prattler, show us to the treasure.

[*Exeunt, into the palace.*

BELARION

The hour's come round. Here, brave guards of Edessa!
Looks he too frail to fight and live like us,

He there of the bright eye and crimson cheek?
'T is fine life in a garden with a woman!
His creatures in the city can pull down
And build up as he bids them, spite of all
The rites and usages of gods and men!

Behold the man. What shall we do with him?

SOLDIERS

Kill him!

BELARION

Ay, kill him! But not instantly.
Let him, and her who styles herself our Queen —
The Greek wench there — let them acquit themselves.
What word, King?

[*In advancing, he stumbles over the dead body of* ANANIAS.

Ah, the old dog 's licked his last!

ABGAR

No word have I for thee to pluck at, thou
Who murderest beauty, truth, and all fair things!
No word have I; but o'er that faithful man
Who gave his life to cure his King's unrest,
Have I a more than word for thee. That 's death!

[*He steps forward quickly, unsheathing his blade, and strikes* BELARION *a mortal blow.*

[BELARION *falls, groaning.*

BELARION

Up there, ye cowards! See my vengeance full!

[*He dies.*

[ABGAR, *defended at the rear by the stone settle, protects himself and* CLEONIS *during an attack of the soldiers, who fall back as if in awe of his commanding front.*

[*During the pause* AGAMEDE, *in silence, forces her way through the ranks, and joins* CLEONIS *and* ABGAR *on the dais.*

CLEONIS (*pointing to the body of* ANANIAS)

"And those most dear to you have peace."

Thy blade!

[ABGAR *hesitates, then yields her his unsheathed sword. She lightly steps downward and lays it upon the body of* ANANIAS, *then returns to* ABGAR, *and they stand defenceless, facing the soldiers.*

ABGAR (*half turning towards the city, from which the red flame breaks afresh and irradiates his helmet of gold*)

Together, love, we go unto the city!

NOTE

Eusebius Pamphili, the fourth-century church historian, cites the public archives of the city of Edessa as authority for the story of Abgar's appeal to Jesus. He relates that Ananias was sent to Jerusalem with the following letter: —

"Abgarus, King of Edessa, to Jesus the good saviour, who appears at Jerusalem, greeting.

"I have been informed concerning you and your cures, which are performed without the use of medicines and herbs. For it is reported that you cause the blind to see, the lame to walk, do both cleanse lepers, and cast out unclean spirits and devils, and restore them to health, who have been long diseased, and raisest up the dead; all which when I heard, I was persuaded of one of these two, namely, either that you are God himself descended from heaven, who do these things, or the son of God.

"On this account therefore I have wrote to you, earnestly to desire you would take the trouble of a journey hither, and cure a certain disease which I am under. For I hear the Jews ridicule you, and intend you mischief. My city is indeed small, but neat, and large enough for us both."

A paraphrase of the reply of Jesus occurs in the drama in this volume. The promise of cure at the end of this reply is more definite as recorded by Eusebius; but since the subsequent fate of the king is obscure, no detailed tradition is violated in the present working out of the story.

There is also a tradition that the napkin of Veronica (or Berenice) came into the possession of Abgar, it having thence gone through many hands to its present resting-place at Rome. In the drama advantage has been taken of this legend to work out the fulfilment of the healer's promise. To com-

plete the harmony of the story, it only needs to assume the identity of Ananias and his retinue with the "Greeks" alluded to in the twelfth chapter of John's Gospel: —

"And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast. The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, 'Sir, we would see Jesus.'

"Philip cometh and telleth Andrew, and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying: —

"'The hour is come that the son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.'"

SONNETS

SONNETS

LIFE'S TAVERN

Night-refuge, set aloft this travelled hill,
'T is deemed by many a lodger but an inn;
Others look round them better and scarce fill
Their first cup ere its mystery doth begin,
And they are led by some divine desire
Where, midmost of an inner room, there bends
Clear flame on golden altar, to which fire
A wide-eyed vestal changelessly attends.
And most, so led, have joy to serve that light
And with the jealous priestess vigil keep;
But woe to any wearying neophyte,
And woe to him who serves with eyes of sleep:
To such is she more bitter than to those
On whom, unlit, her doors forever close!

SULTAN'S BREAD

Remote behind the Sultan's palace wall
That silent rises out of teeming Fez,
A foreign guest, who oft broke bread there, says
One day at food a morsel was let fall;
And Abd-ul, keen of eye, did gently call
Devout slaves to restore the slighted shred —
So prized in his religion is mere bread
To the great lord of that imperial hall.
Up to the table of this life we sit,
With sultan some, and some with tribesman placed.
The fare is wheat or barley on our plate,
And as we break the brittle loaf of it
'T is well to think what fragments we do waste
Which our companions may deem consecrate.

WITH A COPY OF THE MONA LISA

'T is said of Mona Lisa, that those years
  She gave us that we might behold her face
  In all its indefinable rare grace,
As on the immortal canvas it appears, —
'T is said those were from trouble, and from tears,
  Exempted years; and that, all through the place
  Where Leonardo painted her, the days
Found ever scents that charm, and sound that cheers.
Dear one, no Leonardo paints thy smile;
  Few flowers, and little music, oft there be
  To charm away the world's anxiety;
Yet, oh, thy patient face hath all the while
  A more mysterious loveliness than stirs
  The heart of him who hath seen only hers!

THE REZZONICO PALACE

(" *A Roberto Browning, morto in questo palazzo* ")

Low stars and moonlight beauty disavow
That death has ever known her; but around
Her melancholy portals only sound
Of waters makes her music; and the brow
Of stately wall records the legend how
"Died in this palace" a poet Love once crowned.
Here the cold Angel that strong harp unbound:
How chill and silent seem her chambers now!
O World, if ever moon should wander here
Where builds my heart its palace for your song,
And find such tablet in the outer wall,
The poet dead, the chambers still and drear,
Let not its hollow beauty win the throng
To reverence, but let it perish all!

MOTHERS AND SISTERS

Mothers and sisters, whom no sacrifice
  Dismays, nor whom your long, laborious hours
  Do anywise appall, ye are the powers
By whom the swift are girded for the prize
They reach in the light of your believing eyes.
  Ye are the hidden oil the shrine devours —
  Soil of the garden whence the great rose flowers —
The silent force that bids a star arise.
Ye ask of men nor honour, nor regret,
  Nor memory, save one's whose love is all.
Renouncement? Living daily the divine!
  Effacement? Still the world your names shall call:
Monica was the mother of Augustine;
Pascal had Jacqueline — Renan, Henriette!

AFTER READING "THE GOLDEN TREASURY" IN GREEN PARK

Off Piccadilly with its pavement cries,
  Its maddening monotone of wheel and hoof,
Here in Green Park primeval summer lies,
  How near, how yearning, yet how far aloof!
O city, symbol of a world that still
  Heedless of beauty under heaven rolls;
And thou, blithe meadow all with larks a-thrill
  Like poetry, that pasture of great souls—
Ye twain so sundered shall forever dwell,
  A tumult and a blessing side by side:
Here, as to toil-worn Argo once befell
  A singing island on a thundering tide,
Where men might stretch them out in glad release,
We too, much-wandering, hail this hour of peace!

TO GEORGE CRABBE

Dusk falls, and through the deepening silence where
  Red afterglows yon ashen roof do paint
Whose dormer children's tapers gild so fair,
  Far vesper chimes disperse their music faint.
Beneath an ancient arch the river turns
  Full of his inexpressive melody:
With tenderest longing my whole being yearns
  To set his old, imprisoned story free!
Unto this gloaming world, thou, Spirit sweet,
  With me art come; thou art of village things
A low-voiced, love-enfolding paraclete
  Who soothest all their sleepy murmurings,
And lurest from river, chime, and thatchen stead
Tales of the inarticulate, and the dead.

BONINGTON

(1801–1828)

Who mourns his life was brief? He who forgets
Work is the master's measure, and not years!
There on his sands that trailed their Norman nets,
Far from the fluctuant city's joys and fears,
Or in the long Louvre's golden-glorious streets,
Prodigious in accomplishment he dwelled:
A Chatterton of fancies, colour's Keats,
Swift visitant, by other worlds compelled!
Much beauty had this boy to leave on earth;
Grieve not, for he did leave it, hurrying hence
To some more radiant art, some starred rebirth
Where Truth most needed his soul's eloquence,
And where he toils those stately minds among
Who dare glance backward smiling, and with song.

ORPAH

My heart is with thee, Orpah! Meekly thou
  Out of the tender chronicle dost wend
  Back, lonely, unto Moab. Wordless friend,
By those great tears, and that averted brow,
(If anywhere thy loving spirit now
  My backward-turning heart's long cry attend!)
  I swear to thee soul-homage to the end,
And speed thee my allegiance in one vow:
"Silently I from out Love's chronicle
  Will wend alone: of me is little need.
    Silently will I go, and leave her this
Sweet other friend, whose passion words can tell."
  — O Orpah, know that thou art blest indeed,
    For *thou* couldst weep — *thou* hadst Naomi's kiss!

A MOTIVE OUT OF LOHENGRIN

Unearthly beauty of soft light persuadeth
This castle which to shadows did belong;
And through its farthest vaults sweet mellow song
The silence of my wintry halls upbraideth;
Gently as saffron dawn that smiling fadeth
The sable, yielding hours, these search along;
And with them, souls of roses dead — faint throng
Of odours of old years that all-pervadeth.
Lady, this thing I speak not — do not fear it.
'T were more than friendship, yet no better name
Dares my most grateful heart's allegiance claim
Lest this, as I do think, be brother-spirit
To him, swan-brought to Brabant's castled shore,
Who, named aloud, was lost for evermore.

THE MYSTERY OF BEAUTY

I

For whom is Beauty? Where no eyes attend
  As richly goes the day; and every dawn
  Reddens along green rivers whereupon
None ever gaze. Think, could earth see an end
Of all the twilight lovers whose thoughts blend
  With scents of garden blooms they call their own,
  Would not as close the yellowest rose outblown
Be, after them, the unmurmurous evening's friend?
Then wherefore Beauty, if in mortal eye
  That loves them stars no challenge read to shine,
And all the wonder of a sunset sky
  Wax not more wondrous for such smile as thine?
Why, pray, if not for Love which cannot die —
  This old earth-loving Love of thine and mine!

II

When we two from our Summer hills have passed,
And Autumn burns beneath thy praise no more,
Nor any Winter's raving at our door
Shuts each within the other's heart more fast;
Neither Spring's roses learn what lips thou hast —
Oh, then this thing called Beauty to its core
Our wedded souls shall penetrate before
One thought unto Eternity is cast!
Then shall we know the violet's pretext; learn
More definite a promise of the rose,
And its fulfilment; when the maples turn,
Be part of all the glory among those;
Or help the May with her uncoiling fern,
And breathe the trillium open where it grows!

THE COAL BREAKER

(PENNSYLVANIA)

This is the house where, up from ages gone,
Huge forests, root and leaf and bough and bole,
With every bend of breeze and tempest-roll
Preserved in crystal from earth's distant dawn,
Again to light laboriously are drawn.
No continent's tumultuous throes control
Their phalanx more: they are black seams of coal
And are upheaved by human will and brawn.
But see, here in this ogre's castle weaves
A magic power to make those forests glad
And charm away their thousand age's sleep,
For more than all the beauty once they had
Returns, with song of bird and rush of leaves,
In the bright waving hearth-fire calm and deep.

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

(NEW YORK HARBOUR, A.D. 2900)

HERE once, the records show, a land whose pride
Abode in Freedom's watchword! And once here
The port of traffic for a hemisphere,
With great gold-piling cities at her side!
Tradition says, superbly once did bide
Their sculptured goddess on an island near,
With hospitable smile and torch kept clear
For all wild hordes that sought her o'er the tide.
'T was centuries ago. But this is true:
Late the fond tyrant who misrules our land,
Bidding his serfs dig deep in marshes old,
Trembled, not knowing wherefore, as they drew
From out this swampy bed of ancient mould
A shattered torch held in a mighty hand.

END OF VOL. I.

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